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RANTINGS

STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE...

It kind of reminds me of that scene in *Gimme Shelter* when Mick Jagger stands on the stage, watching the Hell's Angels clobbering the concert audience and says, "Why are we fighting?" It was a sobering moment that made everybody step back and ask themselves if the Revolution could really happen if this much chaos was afoot.

Right now, the comics biz is a lot like that concert. It's an ocean of people, each with their own opinions on which way to go, all twisting and turning and frightened and accomplishing nothing. There's the big-business types with their mega-long-term-planners and their grand licensing maneuvers and plans to get the mainstream to sit up and notice. There's the retailer with an idea how it should be done if someone would stop and listen. There's the distributor who thinks they can do whatever they want because they're just big enough to do whatever they want. There's a whole bunch of people bracing for the worst. Chaos is a scary thing.

The solution isn't really that hard. It involves hard work and patience.

Here's the way I see it. Let's go back to the 1960s. Take a look at the kinds of comics that were selling in drugstores and on newsstands. This stuff was fun, escapist, basically safe and inoffensive. Oh, and there's loads of pablum. There wasn't a whole lot that had that personal vision feel to it (except maybe Jack Kirby's stuff).

Now imagine that along comes a series of comics written and drawn by artists who see the medium as something more than spandex and Nazis—who create comics so personal that there is no way in hell they could be distributed through traditional channels.

As an example, let's use Robert Crumb's *Zap Comix*. He's shut out of the newsstand, so what does he do? He and his wife and friends go out on the street and sell it themselves. People notice. People embrace this irreverent concept of wholly creator created and owned comics and start to follow suit around the country. Then what happens? Some enterprising businessmen (and hippie types) decide to get serious and get this material distributed to head shops. People like Denis Kitchen create catalogs and make sure that even hicks like me get them in farm towns in the middle of Illinois.

People who really love the medium will make sure comics get out there even if they have to go out on the street to sell them. Other people who really love comics and want to see them all over the place (and perhaps sense a way to make a buck in the process) will step up and distribute them. It's time for those people to take charge and make those commitments.

Why are we fighting? Maybe what we're fighting is change.

–Frank Kurtz
Editor

P.S. The real phone number to get that Kitchen Sink catalog is 1(800) 365-SINK. Sorry, Jamie.

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HERO ILLUSTRATED

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April
1995

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"We have nothing to fear but idiots!"
—Colleen Doran

"Cash in on the hype!"
—A solicitation ad for "The Guide To Comics"

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LETTERS

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MARC SILVESTRI
THE ROCKETEER
PETER MILLIGAN
THE X-FILES
STAR TREK MEMORIES
HERO
ILLUSTRATED

Top of The Cow, Ma!

Dear *HERO*,

Thank you for the in-depth article on Top Cow studios. It is rare to find anything written about the Bros. Silvestri and company in any trade rag, much less a decent, in-depth piece. It took me by surprise and it was a very pleasant surprise.

I wish that *HERO* could devote a monthly column to Top Cow.

—Scott McMahan
mcmahan@cs.unca.edu

My Funny Varkentine

Dear Editor,

I picked up *HERO* #20 when I saw there was a Peter Milligan interview inside. *Shade* is my favorite book right now and it was gratifying to learn that its author seems much like the man I would expect him to be. People whose work you admire can sometimes seem disappointing when you find out something about them, but this does not seem to be the case with Peter Milligan. The other two examples from my life would be Bob Fosse and the Pet Shop Boys, and I only mention this because *Wizard* did not earn any points from me with a gratuitous PSB slam.... and what's this? A three-parter with Ellison? Careful! You'll make me subscribe!

I'd also like to use this forum to comment on Tony Isabella's dismissal from *Black Lightning*. I've very much enjoyed the first two issues of the book, and was looking forward to a year-long run; now I'm afraid I'm going to have to treat it as a nine-issue limited series. How can an editor know more about the direction a character should go than its creator? Thanks, DC.

—B. Varkentine
Sunnyvale, CA

Dear *HERO*,

In regards to Tony Isabella's "dismissal": Is it any wonder why creator-owned comics are prospering? You can't be "dismissed" from your own book. Anyone else notice the lack of talented creators in company-owned comics (with few exceptions)? Reason is, they're flocking to creator-owned or self-publishing ventures where they cannot be "dismissed." Soon, when the talented creators wake up from working on company-owned projects and get into creator-owned comics, just think how diluted the talent pool in company-owned comics will be.

With moves such as Mr. Isabella's "dismissal" happening all over the industry due to bad editorial decisions, how long do companies think they can keep readers by changing creative teams every few issues? Do the industry and yourself a favor: Buy creator-owned comics, where at least you know who will be back next month to write and draw that particular comic.

With that said, I wonder who will be writing *Black Lightning* in the near future. Could it possibly be a friend or relative of the editor? Nah, that kind of crass editorial decision never happens in comics.

—Walter Nix
Broad Channel, NY

To Boldly Nitpick Where No Man Has Nitpicked Before!

Dear *HERO*,

I'm writing to let you know that in the *HERO* Files of Star Trek [*HERO* #20] has a few misspelled names. I wanted to let people (especially those who do that section) what are the mistakes. Here's the correct written name:

Worf's family name is Rozhenko. You put a S instead of Z.

Ro Larren: Her name has one R. Laren.

Dr. Polanski: Her name is written Pulaski. She also happens to have a first name, it's Katherine.

Alexandar Roshenko: The worst mistake: Alexander Rozhenko. See the E as the last voyel[sic]? Plus the same S instead of Z in his family name.

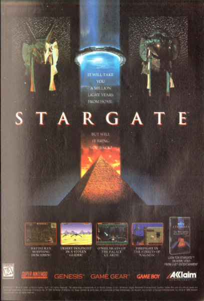
K'Eylar is mistaken too. Based in hearing to write her name? It's K'Ehleyr.

Kira Norese: Her name is written Nerys.

Jedzia Dax: Another with a misspelled name—Jadzia. See the A instead of E.

Also, going to the first *HERO* Files [*HERO* #16], two Legionnaires' names were mispelled *[sic]*. Here's the correct writing: Celeste is written with an E at the end. Computo's real name is Danielle, not Daniella.

In the *X-Men HERO* Files [*HERO* #19], I think that The Dazzler and



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Longshot should be mentionned *[sic]* in the X-Men list. Everyone knows that Longshot is a former X-Man and had his own limited series before joining the X-Men. Dazzler's first appearance was in *X-Men* #130 and near the end of her series, unless I'm wrong, she joined the X-Men.

So I hope you'll check things twice during the next issues because when I saw the mistakes in the Star Trek article, I feel like the persons didn't care about the exactitudes. You guys ought to be better than that.

—Andrew Morgan
Montreal, Quebec, CANADA

Dear *HERO*,

I'm writing in regard to the *HERO* Files installation on Star Trek and the plethora of mistakes it contains.

It's never been confirmed that Saavik was half-Romulan, half-Vulcan. Hikaru Sulu's middle name has never been officially revealed, you list it as "Kato." And Uhura's first name has never been officially revealed either, you list it as "Nyota." I guess it is possible that these three things have been revealed in the content of comics, and that is your basis for this information. But it is not official. Worf's last name is not "Rozhenko," he didn't take the last name of his adoptive parents. Deanna Troi is half-Betazoid, not half-Betazed. And lastly, Dr. Pulaski's first name is not listed. It's "Katherine."

There are a lot of spelling mistakes. So much, in fact, I'm surprised that you didn't misspell "Q." The following is a list of the way they were printed in the article (incorrectly) followed by the correct spelling...

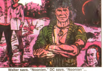
Khan Noonian Singh—Khan Noonien Singh
Jean Luc Picard—Jean-Luc Picard
Ro Larren—Ro Laren
Dr. Polanski—Dr. Pulaski
Alexandar Roshenko—Alexander Rozhenko
K'Eylar—K'Ehleyr
Kira Norese—Kira Nerys
Jedzia Dax—Jadzia Dax
Jem Hadar—Jem'Hadar
Kittomer—Khitomer
Noonian Sung—Noonian Soong
Duuras—Duras

You guys *really* didn't do your homework! Research is a good thing, people!

—Ben Wick
St. Cloud, MN

Rob Holly replies: *Ben, a little research on your part would have told you that the focus of the article (as seen in the headline on page 97) was "*Star Trek *in Comics!" So yes, the first three tidbits you cite come from the comics. More specifically, they come from DC's* Who's Who in Star Trek. *(Look on page 34 of issue #1 for the entry on Khan Noonian Singh, complete with the correct spelling.)*

Not to offer this as an excuse, but misspelling is not always the same as not researching. Yes, some mistakes were made. We apologize on that point, but in our defense we can only say that we don't eat, sleep and breathe Star Trek. *We have other things to occupy our time (like getting punctuation correct. We did print your letter verbatim). Command of the English language is a good thing, people!*



Walter says, "Noonien," DC says, "Noonian"... let's call the whole thing off!

William Shatner replies to everyone (through an old episode of *Saturday Night Live): "Get a life, will you people? I mean, for crying out loud, it was just a TV show ... You've turned an enjoyable little job that I did as a lark for a few years int a complete waste of time! Geez. There's a whole world out there! When I was your age, I didn't even watch television. I lived!"*

Dear *HERO*,

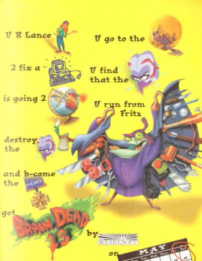
"Love us? Hate us? Write us!" So goes the blurb at the head of your letters page. Well, invitation accepted! Following are some observations and criticism, all of which should be taken as constructive...

I recently started picking up *HERO* on a regular basis (ever since you dropped the irritating Price Guide, to be precise) and I must say the magazine is looking really good. The stories and articles are interesting, and the layout is clean, professional and reader-friendly. (As a newspaper subeditor, I notice these things.)

Unfortunately, as a sub-editor, I als tend to get irritated whenever I see spelling mistakes crop up in slick magazines and comics whose editors and proofreaders should know better. I'm talking about people who apparently don't know the difference between words like "their" and "they're," "its" and "it's," "Who's" and "whose," etc.—you get the idea.

How does *HERO* rate? Pretty good I reckon. The odd spelling mistake does appear every now and then, bu I put that down to human error, not ignorance. Keep up the tight sub-editing and you won't lose those readers who, like me, get annoyed by bad grammar. More importantly, you'll maintain a solid degree of respectability. (Just along those lines ... it used to really irk me whenever I saw the ads in various Continuity Comics title urging parents to let their kids read those books because they were goo for them. Continuity used arguably th worst grammar I've ever read in the industry!)

There is, however, one area in which I find *HERO* a little deficient—that's in the research work done by some of your readers in compiling data for the various articles. By and large, it's inconsistent. Case in point: the Legion Files, in *HERO* #16—the first without the Guide. While it was evident that Brian Wenberg did a tho ough job in chronicling the Legion's history (even to the extent of referring to the LSH Sourcebook), his role call of Legionnaires curiously omitted members such as Polar Boy, Tyroc, Tellus and Dragonmage. Similarly, in Rob Holly's listing of LSH trading cards, while he was certainly clever t pick out Saturn Girl's appearance in the Comic Book Foldies card set, he neglects to mention the Timber Wolf card in the DC Cosmic Teams series,



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nor the LSH appearances in the DC Bloodlines series. And what about the set of LSH postcards issued a few years ago?

I guess my message is: You guys have got your hearts in the right place, let's see you do it better. I'll be watching!

—Ray Chan
Victoria Park East
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Thanks for the kind words about our proficiency at spelling and grammar, Ray, though your praise suggests to us that you're not a Trekkie.

Michael Diana = Comics?

Dear Editor,

Whoa! Mike Diana getting a full page in *HERO* ["Rumblings," *HERO* #20]?!? I'm lost here, guys! Diana, for the uninitiated, is a CONVICTED loony who has been ordered by a federal court to steer clear of anyone under the age of 18 as well as to undergo a well-needed shrinking. That he can command a show—albeit a free one in some stinkburger, hole-in-the-wall dump—defies logic.

Mike Diana does crude scrawls of priests sexually abusing children that he has xeroxed and stapled and passed along as a "comic book." This AIN'T no comic, boys, and Diana AIN'T no comic artist!

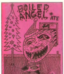
What infuriates me here is the idea of his form of "free speech" commanding the financial support of the Comic Legal Defense Fund. How the supporters of an industry that was built on the dimes from children's pockets could ever consider Diana to infiltrate our ranks is terrifying in its naivete and humiliating to the likes of Kirby, Barks, Romita, Kane, Infantino and Bushmiller, and as a comic artist myself, I hate the son of a bitch.

If Mike Diana thinks he can ride on the coattails of REAL artists and publishers, I'll be waiting for him at the next Chicago Con. Oops! Sorry, Mike! They won't let you near kids, will they?

—Mark Braun
Norridge, IL

Mark, Lenny Bruce is waiting on line two.

With all due respect, you're reading more into our coverage than was intended. Nowhere did HERO *or Diana suggest that he was interested in riding "the coattails of REAL artists and publishers." That wasn't the point of the story. We covered Diana's Chicago appearance because we felt the ultimate point of the story—a man found guilty of obscenity for drawing comic books—was relevant to our readers. As with the cases of 2 Live Crew and Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs, coverage of the subject should not be considered so much an endorsement of the work in question as an endorsement of the First Amendment. As a professional comic book artist (and one who once edited a trade publication of his own to boot), you must be aware that once one person falls prey to censorious crusaders—be they religious leaders or self-proclaimed "law-and-order" zealots—the rest of us are made that much more available the next time they need a target.* That's *the story.*



And We'll Have Fun, Fun, Fun 'Til We Stop

Dear *HERO*ic types,

Way back when, I bought the first issue of *HERO ILLUSTRATED*, read it and set it aside as a *Wizard* knock-off which did not appeal to me in the least. Since then, the magazine has progressed to becoming a title I pick up from time to time, when something noted on the cover interests me. To be quite honest, it's well on its way to becoming something that I never miss an issue of.

What has brought about this change of mind? The growth and maturing of *HERO ILLUSTRATED*! Dropping the Price Guide and shaking off the last of the speculator vermin was a big step forward. However, it's the scope and depth of the articles that keeps me coming back. It's really nice to see that there's a publication devoted to comics that recognizes that there are comic companies besides Image and Marvel. Features on personalities like Gary Groth and Jeff Smith and reviews of material lik *True Swamp* and *Strangers In Paradise* are what reach out and grab me and lead me to buy *HERO*.

It's also good to see that your staff recognizes one of the primary reasons that most of us buy comics: TO HAVE FUN!! There's no snobbery here that looks down on superhero comics, fun TV shows or action figures. Many of your features encourage the creative process by allowing readers to see their artwork in print. Despite the complaints from a few soreheads in the letter column, I hope you continue to publish art by younge fans. People continue creating and skills evolve when they are encouraged. I think you should be commended for recognizing the diversity of fandom when you choose pictures to print.

HERO ILLUSTRATED doesn't have that homey, lived-in, comfortable feel of *Comics Buyers' Guide*, nor does it have the intellectual, analytical bent o *The Comics Journal*. And there is no reason why it should! *HERO* has carved out its own identity and is now striving to develop its fullest. There is more than one type of comic. There i definitely more than one type of comi fan. There is no reason why there shouldn't be more than one type of magazine about comics.

My wish for the future is that you keep striving to develop your identity. Work harder at showing the great diversity of product out there. Focus on overlooked and under-explored areas of comics: comics by women, minority creators, gays and lesbians in the industry. Look at issues that affect creators and the product they offer. Explore exactly what it means t be a fan. Keep breaking the mold and above all, keep having fun!

—Eddie Mitchel
Louisville, K

Navigating The Stormy Seas of Personal Income

Dear *HERO*,

This letter is in response to John Benton's "Markets" article, "Navigatin The Stormy Seas of Comics." [*HERO* #20] I do not read *Superman*, *Batman*, *Spider-Man* or the *X-Men* because they have too many companion titles. I must admit that I was immediately hooked on *Generation X* because their powers were so unique I also have to admit that I find myself purchasing all of the new *X*-titles afte the death of Professor X. I'm agreein

BART IS BACK!
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IN MARCH

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with a lot of the things Mr. Benton said in his article. I'm 31 years old with a well-paying, full-time job and with today's comic prices, I find it a bit difficult to purchase all the titles I want. So I can imagine how difficult it must be on a young kid with an allowance. I must also say that I can't quibble about the cost too much because most writers and especially artists work hard on these comics. Most of Image hero's [sic] have very elaborate and highly detailed costumes, so I have a lot of respect for the work the artists have put into their drawings.

—Franco Mills
Las Vegas, NV

Does that mean that artists should get paid less if their book contains nudity?

X Marks The Review

Dear *HERO*,

Thanks for the recent wowzer review of *X* [*HERO* #19]. I wish we could bring the price back down, too.

—Steven D. Grant
from CompuServe

Hey, if you liked that, you'll love page 47 of this issue...

Wanted: Creators and Stuff

Hello *HERO*,

I was reading your January issue [*HERO* #19] and the letter from Teresa M. Vanmeter caught my eye. In your answer, you included a list of publishers that might be interested in outside projects. You forgot to list one important one, One Shot Press.

One Shot Press has a title that was designed just for new people trying to get their work published and out. *Midnite's Quickies* is illustrated by our readers. Midnite is the hostess and the Quickies are stories submitted to us here at the Captain's Crypt. Some artists have gone on to illustrate other stories for us. One such case is Tom Figura. His reworked version of "Friendly Fire" was accepted and published in *Midnite's Quickies* #1. He was 15 years old at the time. He has also reillustrated "The Same Old Story," a werewolf tale from *The Captain's Jolting Tales* #1, and that is being published in *The Best of One Shot Press*, due out this July from CFD/Visual Anarchy.

Please pass the word to the hopeful new talent out there that we are interested in looking at their stuff. Keep up the great work at *HERO*.

—David C*J Bunn
ONE SHOT PRESS
P.O. Box 474
Stafford Springs, CT
06076

Consider it passed, David.

PSYCHO LETTER

DEAR *HERO*,

After careful consideration, we of the high council deem you worthy of this information. Before your eyes, world events are being molded into proper forms for our ascension of power. We are manipulators and we control all. We are the Happy, Fun Clan, and soon all will fear our name. After hours of constant debate, ***HERO ILLUSTRATED*** emerged as the only feasible choice for a media ally. We of the Happy, Fun Clan have only one goal: to make the entire state of Indiana into a giant lake filled with EZ Cheese. That's right; that nifty little unidentifiable substance that comes in an odd spray can will cover what once was Indiana.

But we have other goals. We will soon rule the world, and being the smart folks you are, you probably will want a piece of the cake. We will give you your own section of the United States (editors' choice). Additionally, we will give all those who work for your publica tion high-ranking positions in our utopian society built around EZ Cheese. You will have great power and all the EZ Cheese you could ever want. But their will be a high price for being included in our massive power structure: one ***HERO ILLUSTRATED*** T-shirt. (But if you are in a really good mood, send nine others for the rest of the high councilmen in exchange for the added bonus of a small European country.) I realize that this is an extremely high price to pay for ultimate power, so being the nice person I am, I will give you a less valuable and more easily accessible alternative: $10 millio and a small thermo-nuclear device.

But in return you will be bestowed with the honor of being inclu ed in our new world order. You will be an intricate part in our pla to flood the media with Happy, Fun Clan propaganda. You can eve assist in our destruction of all the major networks, which refuse t include our subliminal messages in their programming schedule. B you are the first and only magazine to be acknowledged by the Happy, Fun Clan. Be assured that you are truly worthy. You will n regret this investment.

—Josh Lynn (High Councilman Sev

P.S. I realize that "their" (second paragraph, sixth line) is the wro form.... but I am a High Councilman who is all knowing, so it does matter.

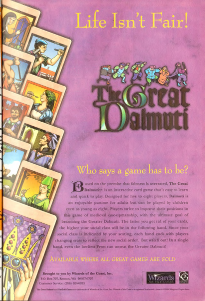
Well, maybe it doesn't matter to the High Council, young man, but if you're going to conquer the world, you're going to use good grammar doing it, or you can just forget the whole thing right now!

Seriously, it's a tempting offer, Jos ... er, High Councilman Seven, especially that part about destroying the TV networks, but how about a compr mise: We'll send you a HERO hat and you give us total sovereignty in you local store? Yeah ... I kinda like the sound of that ...

Correctional Center

In HERO *#18's Markets column (and our* HERO *1994 Yearbook), we inadvertantly suggested that Lightnin Comics had gone out of business. Lightning was kind enough to point out to us that they did not cease op ations at the end of last year, but ha merely suspended them temporarily. Our apologies.*

Second, the Hooked On Comix *video [reviewed in* HERO *#20 was distributed, not produced, by Fantagraphics. It was independently produced by D.P. Works, and while Bill Griffith's quote appears on the outside box, he does not appear in the video.* ▲



Life Isn't Fair!

The Great Dalmuti

Who says a game has to be?

Based on the premise that fairness is overrated, **The Great Dalmuti™** is an interactive card game that's easy to learn and quick to play. Designed for five to eight players, **Dalmuti** is an enjoyable pastime for adults but can be played by children even as young as eight. Players strive to improve their positions in this game of medieval one-upmanship, with the ultimate goal of becoming the Greater Dalmuti. The faster you get rid of your cards, the higher your social class will be in the following hand. Since your social class is indicated by your seating, each hand ends with players changing seats to reflect the new social order. But watch out! In a single hand, even the lowliest Peon can unseat the Greater Dalmuti!

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RUMBLINGS

WHAT'S SHAKING IN THE WORLD OF COMICS

Compiled by Steve Spaulding and Steve Darnall

"SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE" TOUR BEGINS ON HIGH NOTE

More than 200 people come to Austin for the first "anti-convention"

The Spirits of Independence Tour, designed to promote the work of independent and self-publishers, got under way in Austin, TX, on March 19. More than 200 people showed up (some from as far away as Florida) to see more than 30 small-press creators and publishers, including Colleen Doran (*A Distant Soil*), Martin Wagner (*Hepcats*), Rick Veitch (*Rare-Bit Fiends*), Terry Moore (*Strangers In Paradise*), Larry Marder (*Beanworld*), Sam Hurt (*Eyebeam*) and *Cerebus* creator/publisher Dave Sim. Shannon Wheeler (*Too Much Coffee Man*) was a last-minute cancellation.

As the main braintrust behind the Spirits of Independence tour (and the man responsible for funding the operation), Dave Sim was especially delighted and relieved by the turnout. "There were *many* moments of genuine concern that it wouldn't be big at all," he laughed, "right up to 11:00 a.m. Sunday [when the doors opened] ... I had my fingers crossed that Bethesda"—home of last year's Small Press Expo, the event Sim credits as his inspiration— "was not a fluke."

According to John Christian, owner of the Austin store Paper Heroes, the crowd "trickled in steadily all day. It was a nice, smooth flow all day. Frankly, anything more would have been taxing." The Paper Heroes staff served as "resident retailers" for the Austin show. "I had seven employees there with me and not one of us had time to enjoy the show. We were seriously busy ... yet at no point was there just a throng of people, so it was actually kind of pleasant."

Are the Stones touring again? No, it's (from l. to r.) Ezra Veitch (son of Rick and, according to Dave Sim, "future self-publisher"), Colleen Doran, Larry Marder, Dave Sim and Rick Veitch, the day after the first Spirits of Independence show. *Photo by Gerhard.*

"It wasn't like your typical convention," Wagner agreed, "where the atmosphere is one of some really weird tension that you can't put your finger on exactly. What you had here was basically an anti-convention. Instead of a roomful of dealers trying to cut each other's throats and sell you the same set of Marvel Masterpiece cards, what you had here was a roomful of artists who were all into comics. Because of that, everyone there felt a sort of camaraderie. No one was being hit for $200 for a first printing of *Bone* or anything like that. This was geared toward the 'Do you like that? Well, maybe you'll like *this*' crowd. It was more than benign; it was a love happening."

Sim credits John Christian and his staff for a lot of the goodwill that dominated the day's events. "[The Paper Heroes staff] knew from the word 'go that we were trying to make this a very comfortable event," he noted, "s there was none of that, 'Check your badge, check your stamp' sort of thing. We were all far more interested in communicating the excitement lev that was going on."

According to Wagner, "It was a really auspicious beginning for the whole Spirits of Independence Tour and it really shows that there's a solid base of support for comics like ours."

The next stop on the Spirits Tour is March 25, in the Columbus Hyatt Regency in Columbus, OH. Guests are scheduled to include Sim, Paul Pope (*THB*), Don Simpson (*Bizarre Heroes*) and Stephen Bissette (*Tyrant*). Sim reports that all of the tables at the Columbus show are sol out, but adds, "We had a lot of peopl come out to the Austin show who were too late to get a table, but ... we're a very flexible gypsy caravan. I you're part of the show, all you need is a minicomic to prove it, so come o in and start promoting." Small-press creators and publishers seeking information on the remaining stops on the Spirits Tour are advised to fax Aardvark-Vanaheim Publishing at (519) 576-0955.

MARVEL EXCLUSIVE

Marvel announces plans to distribute exclusively through Heroes World; changes at Diamond and Capital reflect "New dynamic."

According to a column by Marvel Vice President-Direct Market Matt Ragone scheduled for the June *Sales to Astonish*, Marvel and Heroes world will exclusively distribute Marvel product beginning with July shipping.

That means Marvel comics will no longer be available through other direct-market distributors, including Capital City and Diamond.

Heroes World Vice President John Pope had no comment. No other details of the move were available at press time.

"As you have probably heard, Marvel and Heroes World Distribution have announced their future," Ragone said in his column, which appears in Marvel's monthly solicitation catalog sent to distributors and retailers. "Marvel and Heroes World will proceed with the next step of Marvelution—the exclusive distribution of Marvel products commencing with July shipping. While opinions may continue to swirl around the industry about the impact of this change, the fact is that no segment of this industry is satisfied with 1994 performance levels, or early 1995 performance. Sales and profits are down at every level and retailers report that customer traffic is down."

Maureen McTigue of DC Comics and Lou Bank of Dark Horse Comics offered no comment on the exclusive deal. Representatives of both Diamond Distribution and Capital Distribution were unavailable for comment. Prior to the Marvel announcement however, both companies instituted changes in company operations, which, some would say, were in anticipation of the Marvel/Heroes World deal.

Diamond Comic Distributors, Inc., decided to postpone their annual retailers seminar, previously scheduled from May 20-23 in Las Vegas. The statement was made in a press release issued Feb. 22. As of this writing, the seminar has not been rescheduled.

The seminar is one of the industry's most high-profile retailer conventions. Ostensibly an opportunity for retailers to meet with Diamond representatives and discuss distribution problems and strategies, it's also allowed retailers from all over the country to compare business practices and plan their coming year with representatives of the major comic-book publishers.

In the press release, Diamond CEO and President Stephen A. Geppi said, "A set of 'New Dynamics' is evolving in our industry, as suppliers, distributors and retailers alike strive to understand the implications of Marvel's recent Heroes World acquisition.... In the meantime, because of the uncertainties in this marketplace and the timing of the changes taking place, it becomes extremely difficult to plan and coordinate an event of the seminar's size and scope."

Diamond hopes to reschedule the seminar for later in the year. Geppi also offered a formal apology to anyone inconvenienced by the postponement, and offered to cover any costs involved in the rescheduling or cancellation of travel plans.

On Feb. 17, Capital City Distribution Co. announced that it had laid off nearly 10 percent of its 550-person work force.

According to Capital City President Milton Griepp, "Our decision to trim the work force was based on a decline in orders for the first quarter of this year, but also on a desire to build a leaner, stronger, more competitive company. This industry is going through a period of retrenchment and consolidation, and we had to bring our expense-to-sales ratio in line with market conditions."

Of the 53 employees Capital City laid off, 11 were working at the company's Madison, WI, headquarters. A number of positions throughout the company were eliminated by attrition. No warehouses were closed as a result of the changes in personnel.

Griepp stressed that the changes would not affect Capital's relationships with retailers or publishers.

Griepp noted that Capital is not alone in having to make such business decisions. "Publishers, distributors and retailers are all feeling the effects of a market that's in transition."

MARVEL
COMICS

Fund for Breanna Thingvall

On Aug. 18, 1994, Breanna Thingvall (daughter of comic retailer Joel Thingvall) was critically injured in a motor accident. She remains in a coma. The Thingvall family's insurance will not cover the cost of caring for her at home, and the bills continue to mount. For those wishing to make a donation, The Supplement Needs Fund for Breanna Thingvall has been established at Heritage Bank, 2700 7th Ave. E., North St. Paul, MN 55109.

Tim Burton Attacks!

Daily Variety announced that Warner Bros. has acquired the film rights for *Mars Attacks!*, the 1962 Topps card series that achieved notoriety as one of the most violent and controversial series in the company's history (and subsequently, one of the most sought after). According to the *Daily Variety* article, the *Mars Attacks!* movie will be the next film project for director Tim Burton, whose previous projects include the first two *Batman* movies, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Beetlejuice* and last fall's *Ed Wood*.

The rumor mill grinds exceedingly fine for Blackball

Blackball Comics has finally gone out of business for real. Last summer, Blackball was plagued with rumors that it had folded, which, according to Blackball publisher Dave Elliott, eroded its customer base to the point it could no longer continue to publish. "There was really no point in going on," Elliott said in a press release issued by Blackball creator Mark Wheatley. "Once people got it into their heads that we were gone, there was no telling them it wasn't so." Wheatley has announced plans to self-publish his *Radical Dreamer* (as seen in *HERO ILLUSTRATED*) through his new company, Mark's Giant Economy Size Comics.

The *Late Late* Harlan Ellison

On Friday, Feb. 17, Harlan Ellison appeared as a guest on CBS's *The Late Late Show with Tom Snyder*. In the course of the interview, he discussed his work on *The New Twilight Zone*, his hatred of travel, growing old, spaghetti Western soundtracks, Marvel Comics' purchase of Heroes World Distribution, the O.J. Simpson trial and his new Dark Horse comic book, *Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor*. Highlights included Harlan comparing New York Senator Alphonse D'Amato to Heinrich Himmler and telling Lou Bank, Dark Horse's V.P. of Sales and Marketing, to "piss off."

Animated WildC.A.T.s cancelled

A source at WildStorm Productions has confirmed that the *WildC.A.T.s* animated series, based on Jim Lee's Image comic book, has been cancelled by CBS and will not return next season. Further details will appear in the next issue of *HERO ILLUSTRATED*.

MARVEL, NOW CUT BACK

Books are cancelled, NOW staffers go to free-lance status

As the comic-book industry continues to undergo restructuring on a number of levels, both Marvel and NOW Comics have announced plans to cut back on the number of titles they publish.

Marvel has announced plans to cancel 25 titles by the spring of 1995, including all *Punisher* and *Conan*-related titles (three of each), *Blackwulf, Blade, Blaze, Darkhawk, Nick Fury of S.H.I.E.L.D., Guardians of the Galaxy, Marvel Comics Presents, Marvel Super-Heroes Megazine, Morbius, Namor, Night Thrasher, Nova, Ravage 2099 AD, Secret Defenders, Silver Sable, Spider-Man Magazine, Spider-Man Megazine* and *Warlock and the Infinity Watch.*

Also in February, NOW Comics announced a reduction in their creative staff and published titles, in which all but two of their full-time staffers had been transferred to "freelance status."

ABOVE: Two (of many) recent comic casualties

"We're still in the market, but taking a very cautious approach while we're waiting for the market to come back some," said Julian Berkin, publisher of *NOW* comics. "As with a lot of the independent publishers, we're waiting to see a little bit more of a consolidation and benefit. We still have a lot of back material, and may see an opportunity to come back with some of those [cancelled] books. The main thing is, again, like a lot of publishers, we're seeing a lot of softness with those numbers, and when the numbers start to come back a little bit we can afford to be a little more aggressive in the release of books."

According to Berkin, NOW's cancellations are "primarily *Married With Children* and *Speed Racer.*" The company will continue to publish *Syphons*, their science-fiction superhero title, and *The Green Hornet*, their premiere licensed property.

DAVID WAYNE DIES

Veteran actor appeared on **Batman, Ellery Queen**

David Wayne, a veteran actor whose career in theater, film and television lasted for over 40 years, died on Thursday, Feb. 9, after a long bout with lung cancer.

Born Wayne McMeekan in Traverse City, MI, he achieved his first taste of fame in 1947 by winning a Tony Award for his portrayal of the leprechaun in *Finain's Rainbow*. Seven years later he won another Tony for the Role of Sakini in *Tea House of the August Moon.*

In the 1960s, Wayne impressed genre fans everywhere with his two appearances on the *Batman* television show as Jervis Tetch, the Mad Hatter. In 1977, he portrayed Inspector Queen on NBC's critically acclaimed but short-lived *The Adventures of Ellery Queen* (the late actor Jim Hutton—father of Timothy Hutton—portrayed Ellery).

Wayne was 81.

TOM DEFALCO TALKS!

In his first interview since leaving Marvel, the former editor in chief discusses his tenure and the "Marvelution"

For the first time since his departure as Marvel Comics' editor in chief, Tom DeFalco discussed some of the circumstances surrounding his seven-year tenure and eventual departure from Marvel, which took place last fall. *[ED. NOTE: a more complete interview will appear in next month's issue of* HERO.*]*

In an interview with Ruth Morrison, DeFalco admitted, "I was informed of the 'Marvelution' about 24 hours before it was announced. My immediate response ... I didn't really have one. I think they had intended to bring me into the Marvel editorial restructuring, but I was not part of the planning."

According to DeFalco, "Marvel keeps talking to me about some sort of consulting arrangement. I've never done consulting, so I don't know what that entails ... [Terry Stewart, Marvel's chief operating officer] may want me to sharpen Stan [Lee]'s pencils! I'd volunteer to do that. Hanging out with Stan is like going to school without having to pay tuition."

Throughout the interview, DeFalco suggested that during his last couple of years, Marvel was "kind of hectic" and "going through a bad time ... I wanted to make Marvel fun again." To that end, he said he had initiated a training program for staffers, in order to give them "a body of knowledge about comics." The program, which DeFalco described as "the equivalent to a college-level class," was scheduled to begin in 1995, "but I don't know what the status is."

During DeFalco's seven-plus years as editor in chief, the company was the source of some controversy amongst comic-book fans and professionals: Marvel went public with its stock, became the first major publisher to regularly implement cover enhancements (beginning with the foil-enhanced cover to *Silver Surfer* #50 and the glow-in-the-dark cover t *Ghost Rider* #15) and increased output to, at one point, over 100 titles a month—a move that some pros and fans believed was a result of the nee to keep stockholders satiated. DeFalco insisted that stockholders had very little direct influence on editorial directions. "On the occasions when a stockholder would identify himself to me, it was usually someon who liked the comics and was thrilled to be part of the company ... I've always had a theory: If you do a goo job, and the company does well, everybody will be happy and they'll l you keep on doing what you're doing

SHOOTING STAR SIGNING A SUCCESS

On Jan. 28, an in-store signing was held at Shooting Star Comics of Glendale, CA, to show support for owner Sam Silbert and to raise money for the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. Comic fans were invited to bring up to five items to be signed by some of the top creators in comics at a dollar donation per autograph. The event raised more than $800 for the Fund.

"It went very well," said Silbert. "We had a very good turn out, considering that we didn't have that much time to promote it ... we had a lot of the creators come through for us."

Of all the creators scheduled to attend, only Jim Lee and Neil Gaiman were unable to participate due to scheduling conflicts. Frank Miller (*Sin City*), Howard Chaykin (*Power and Glory*), Gil Kane (*The Edge*), Gilbert & Jaime Hernandez (*Love and Rockets, Birdland*) and Sondra Chang (*Shadeeva*) were all present and signing. Surprise guests included James Robinson (*Starman*), Travist Charest (*Flash Annual*), Shawn McManus (*Dr. Fate*), Steve Seagle (*Sandman Mystery Theater*) and Dan Norton (*Grifter One Shot*).

Silbert was cited for "display of indecent material" on Nov. 3, 1994, when his store was searched and merchandise seized by two undercover detectives. His hearing has been postponed yet again, this time to March 22.

Individuals interested in obtaining information about the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund and its work or those wishing to make a donation can write or call:

CBLDF
P.O. Box 693
Northampton, MA
01061-0693
1-800-992-2533

ENTERTAINMENT GENERAL

and © Eclipse Comics

Carl Potts

*In this, the second of a series of interviews with Marvel's new line editors, HERO talks with Carl Potts, head of the General Entertainment Group. Potts began his career as an artist (*Moon Knight, Power Man and Iron Fist*) and writer (*Alien Legion, Punisher War Journal*) and later moved into editing and art direction before becoming a line editor.*

As head of General Entertainment, what are you in charge of?

Most of the licensed material, with the exception of the juvenile stuff like *Barbie* and the *Disney* books that are now a part of Welsh Family Publishing. I oversee everything from *Conan* to *Ren & Stimpy*, the King Features properties like the *Phantom* and *Prince Valiant, Mandrake* and *Flash Gordon*. Quite a range there. I also oversee certain corners of the Marvel universe. I'm in charge of all the spin-offs we're doing of the Marvels limited series; we're doing *Marvels II* and *Tales of the Marvels*. I also oversee all the Marvel Alternaverse books which are alternate reality books, like *What If?* and special projects like *Ruins* and the *Last Avengers Story.*

Most of your titles, especially the licensed properties, seem to be pretty much self-contained.

Yeah, they stand alone for the most part, although we are talking about the possibility of doing some crossovers if we can get all the parties involved to agree. For instance, in June we're doing a big relaunch on *Conan*. The color book's just being called *Conan* and the black-and-white's called *Conan the Savage*. We've got some top-notch creators on there, including Larry Hama, Chuck Dixon, Simon Bisley. We're hoping that, even though *Conan* is a licensed property, if we can get approvals from all concerned, we might be doing some crossovers, including possibly one with our new sister company Malibu, with *Rune*.

What is the "Alternaverse"? A What If? spin-off?

What If? is very continuity specific, it's like, "What if this happened instead of that?" and so we're doing some alternate-universe specials that aren't quite so specific. For instance, *Ruins* [being written by Warren Ellis] is, "What if the Marvels had taken a different turn?" But it doesn't spin off from one continuity element. Then we have Peter David, who wrote "The Last Avengers Story." We're working on that ... we've actually come up with a new sub-imprint for that that's pretty nice. It will be the trade-dress for the covers of those books.

What does the future hold for General Entertainment?

We're going to have quite a wide range of material for all different groups and demographics. We've got something for everybody and we're going to try to make it the best it can be.

It's just WRONG!

Just stick this in the tape deck of your white Chevy Bronco and get ready to cruise. As of this writing, O.J. Simpson's *I Want to Tell You* is now the #1 selling audio book in the country. Will whoever out there is doing this *please* give it a rest?

I WANT TO TELL YOU

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AND ACCESS TO THE WHEEL OF WORLDS
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NOW HE HAS HIS SIGHTS SET ON EARTH.
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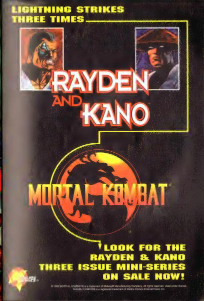
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IN THE WORKS

COMING SOON TO A COMIC STORE NEAR YOU!

compiled this month by Steve Darnall, King of The Honky-Tonk

SAYING "FAREWELL" TO *THE FAR SIDE!*

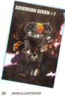
THE SOVEREIGN SEVEN *ARRIVE ON EARTH ...* SUPERMAN *FIGHTS ALIENS ... ULTRAFORCE MEETS THE AVENGERS ...*

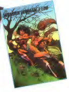
AC COMICS

It was bound to happen: After some 80-plus issues (and some 80-plus years), it's time for "The Death of Joan Wayne!" in *Femforce* #84. The usual suspects (Bill Black, Brad Gorby and Mark Heike) provide the honors. Oh, and they'll also be responsible for *Crimebuster* #0, which brings Charles Biro's Golden Age creation "kicking and screaming into the violent '90s." Like, wow, man ...

DC

You might not be aware that 1995 marks the 60th anniversary of the company we've come to know as DC Comics, but you will be ... oh, yes. You will be. DC will see to that this fall with *DC Comics*, a 256-page, oversized hardcover coffee-table book covering the company's long and often glorious history. All we can say is "Sockamagee!"





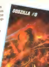
Before that, however, there'll be books like Chris Claremont's *Sovereign Seven*, the first creator-owned title to posit itself in the DC Universe. It's the story of seven super-powered refugees who find themselves castaways on a mysterious planet known as Earth. Artist Dwayne Turner and inker Jerome K. Moore round out the creative team on this one. Watch for it May 16.

You know, if you're like us, you probably wake up every morning, call DC and scream, "More Batman and Superman!" Well, looks like we all got our wish: This May, DC launches two new quarterly titles, *The Batman Chronicles* and *Superman: The Man of Tomorrow*. The former features a variety of stories by a variety of creative teams (starting with Chuck Dixon, Lee Weeks and Bill Sienkiewicz!) while the latter is designed to fit seamlessly among the four regular *Superman* titles (thanks in part to Superman's pals Roger Stern, Tom Grummett and Brett Breeding). Find out what it means when Superman returns to Metropolis—and so does Lex Luthor!

Batman and Supes are two of DC' stalwarts; a third, Wonder Woman, hits the 100-issue mark in May, and Diana learns the truth behind the co test that allowed Artemis to become the new Wonder Woman. "Fate has ordained that only one Wonder Woman will survive this battle," DC says, and we believe it. William Messner-Loebs and Mike Deodato, J bring things to a thundering climax fo themselves and for the book; starting with *WW* #101, the book's new write and artist will be John Byrne!

Over at Milestone, D.G. Chicheste (*Daredevil*), Denys Cowan and Prentis Rollins (*Hardware*) begin *Th Long Hot Summer*, a pivotal three-issue miniseries that "forever shatter the status quo for the heroes of the Milestone-verse. When a theme park is erected on the site of the Big Bang thousands of low-income citizens are forced to move and it isn't long befor all hell breaks loose! While it won't b necessary to read every tie-in book, *The Long Hot Summer* will make itse felt in all the Milestone titles (and fur ther questions about the future of Milestone should be answered in next month's *HERO*)!

Later in this issue, you'll learn abo some of the goodies Vertigo's got planned for '95. Here's another: *Chiaroscuro: The Private Lives of Leonardo da Vinci*, a 10-issue series from writers Dave Rawson and Pat McGreal, and art from Chas Truog (*Animal Man*) and Rafael Kayanan. Now, for the first time, you can learn the strange and mysterious secret that fueled the genius of this genuine Renaissance man—with the help of a supporting cast that includes Michelangelo, Machiavelli and a lovely frail whom we later know as the Mona Lisa!



DARK HORSE

Madman Comics #7 brings the Madman/Big Guy team up to a cataclysmic conclusion, as the pair must battle a band of renegade robots in an effort to save Dr. Boiffard and his ever-expanding gray matter. Will their efforts be in vain or will they save the massive brain? Tune in May 16 as Mike Allred and Frank Miller spread the vibe!

You may also have heard about a certain band of aliens meeting up with a certain Man of Steel. It's true! Watch for *Superman vs. Aliens*, a three-part miniseries scheduled to begin in May. What could possibly stop the Big Red S from discovering his long-lost heritage? Well, duh, take a look at the title (and join us in *HERO* #24 for an interview with the book's main man, Dan Jurgens)! The Aliens are keeping busy elsewhere with *Aliens vs. Predator: War* (a four-issue miniseries by Randy Stradley, Mike Manley and Ricardo Villagran) and *Aliens/Predator: The Deadliest of The Species* #11, which brings Chris Claremont and Eduardo Barreto's epic series thundering toward an explosive climax—which includes the first appearance of a brand-new Alien hybrid!

Over in the Dark Horse Heroes Universe, "The War For Arcadia" comes to an explosive close in *X* #15, and anyone who survives could conceivably be called a winner! Steven Grant writes (and on page 47 of this issue, he speaks), Javier Saltares (*Ghost Rider*) draws, you read. Simple, eh?

Then, in June, get ready for the return of Godzilla! This 13-part series starts June 6 with issue #0, as a vengeance-obsessed professor plans to get her revenge against the King of Monsters—with the help of the "Killer Bee" missile. You better believe there's more to it than that!

EL CAPITAN

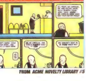
David Lapham's critically acclaimed *Stray Bullets* takes a trip back to 1977 in issue #2, as 7-year-old Virginia Applejack walks out of *Star Wars* and right onto the scene of a vicious murder. El Capitan Press calls *SB* #2 a story "about losing the things we'd like to keep, the fear of revenge and the innocence of nihilism." Fans of Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* and the Coen Brothers' *Blood Simple* should check this one out (and for more on David Lapham, check out page 45).

ENTITY

We're always delighted to see George Perez turn up in odd, out-of-the-way places ... like on the cover of *Aster* #0, due in May. Oliver Isabedra handles the interior art, which fleshes out Narcisco and Ronaldo Roxas' "fabulous origin of comics' hottest new hero! It's everything you ever wanted to know about the universe's most powerful celestial knight *in full digital color*!"

FANTAGRAPHICS

When the company that brought us Peter Bagge, Dan Clowes, Roberta Gregory and the Hernandez Brothers



FROM *ACME NOVELTY LIBRARY* #5

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(continued on page 25)

IN THE WORKS

calls Chris Ware "The new master of us all," it's not to be taken lightly. Skeptics and seekers can determine the veracity of that statement in May with the release of Ware's *Acme Novelty Library* #5, starring "Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth." It's disturbing laughs galore when Jimmy faces the prospect of being reunited with his long-estranged father. Ware's art has appeared in Chicago's *New City* newspaper and *Entertainment Weekly*, and his book has won raves from the likes of Martin Wagner and Alex Ross.

IMAGE

After last month, you wouldn't think we'd have any more to say about this bunch, but *au contraire!* WildStorm studios is planning a massive crossover for May, to be called *WildStorm Rising*. *Rising* will be a two-issue series that serves as bookends for the activities going on in the studios' regular books, including *WildC.A.T.s, StormWatch, WetWorks, Gen¹³* and two new series: *Grifter*, by Steven T. Seagle, Ryan Benjamin and Tom McWeeney, and *Team 7—Objective: Hell*, a cheery-sounding affair from Chuck Dixon (*Robin*) and Chris Warner(*X*). Barry Windsor-Smith provides covers for all 11 issues of the saga, as well as interior art for the inaugural chapter.

Okay, so maybe you dug *Vampirella*—are you ready for *Avengelyne*? You should be, as it's the co-creation of Cathy Christian, the woman who came to great fame on the convention circuit as Vampirella. *Avengelyne* is the story of an angel who is cast out of heaven to atone for her sins, only to find priests to the left of her, demons to the right ... here she is, stuck in the middle with you. Robert Napton and some guy named Liefeld will write; John Stinsman will draw.

Long ago, when *HERO* included a special Extreme comic (in issue #8, wasn't it? Ah, those were the days), lucky readers got an early glimpse of Cybrid; this June, they'll get an even better look when *Cybrid* #0 hits the streets. Garrett Omata and Sam Liu do the honors.

MALIBU/MARVEL

Now that the former company is owned by the latter, all we can say is "Let the crossovers begin!" Hot on the heels of the *Silver Surfer/Rune* crossover comes *Curse of Rune* #1, which brings Adam Warlock into the Ultraverse in pursuit of his missing Soul Gem—which just happens to be imbedded in Rune's head. That's gotta hurt! Chris Ulm and Kyle Hotz take care of business on this one.

Meanwhile, Loki is in hot pursuit of the Infinity Gems, which have also landed in strategic points throughout the Ultraverse, and he's not above battling Hardcase, Mantra and The Night Man to get them! The fun begins in May with *Hardcase* #23, then moves to *Mantra* #22 in June and *The Night Man* #22 in July!

That's not the only news from the Malibu/Marvel Marching Society: Aft disappearing in *Avengers* #375, the Black Knight joins Ultraforce in issue #8. All three Marvel excursions into the Ultraverse are set to pave the w for August's big event: the *Ultraforce Avengers* crossover! All the Avenger know about the Black Knight is that he's gone, and they've come to get him back!

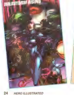
Then, in September, the biggest event of all: *Black September*, which Malibu's Tom Mason promises will "reconfigure certain elements in both the Ultraverse and the Marvel Universe"!

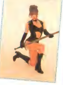
While we're on the subject, what about the Marvel Universe? Well, having enjoyed/endured big shakeup on the business end, now it looks li Marvel's poised for big shakeups on the artistic end. *Fantastic Four: Atlantis Rising* is a miniseries/crossover event that will run not only through *FF*, but *Fantastic Force, Fantastic Four Unlimited* and *Warlo and the Infinity Watch!* Marvel prom es, among other things, "the final fa of the Inhumans and Atlantis!"

That's not all that's shaking up the Marvel-verse this May: The Punishe bids adieu in a sense as *Punisher War Zone, Punisher War Journal* an *The Punisher* all sail away into the sunset. One suspects the NRA will be even more disappointed than comics fans.

Remember The *X-Men*? You know the team that didn't really exist after all because the man who would hav formed them got killed by his son w went back into the past to kill Magneto instead? Yeah, them. Well, *X-Men: Prime* arrives in May and proves that everything you knew about the X-Men that turned out to be a lie turns out to be a lie! Actual with *X-Men: Prime*, it turns out Xavier's alive and well, but so are three fugitives from the world of Apocalypse—and they're intent on making themselves at home with us! (And, by an amazing coincidence, th repercussions will be felt in all the X-books, from *Cable* to *Excalibur* to *Wolverine*!) In fact, there's a possibi ty that they'll replace their counterparts in the original continuity! Even they don't, you can be sure of one thing: June will see the launch of a *tenth X*-title! According to Marvel ma keting manager Dan Buckley, "One the nine monthly *X*-books will, for ve logical reasons that I cannot reveal, continue as a regular series. This continuing series will not replace its regular continuity counterpart, but w ill add to the new continuity that [illegible] from the events of 'After Xavier.'" More news next month...

Finally: Who is the *real* Peter Parker? If that X-stuff didn't baffle you, then neither will this: *Spectacular Spider-Man* #226 reveals once and for all who's really Peter Parker and who's really a clone.





MU PRESS

It's funny animals galore when *Zu* #1 comes out in May. This anthropomorphic anthology features Darko Macan's Sergei (a mercenary bear) in "An Old Story," and "The Dog Laundry" in which Marc Schirmeister and Kjartan Arnorsson offer the newest (and best?) possible solution to getting your dog into the bath!

PAGE ONE

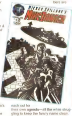
You say you love strips like *Calvin & Hobbes, Doonesbury* and *Life in Hell* but you don't always have time to track down the daily paper? *Comic Relief* has presented the answer to that dilemma for six years now. In addition to the above, they also reprint cartoons from Lynda Barry and Tom Tomorrow, political cartoons from both ends of the spectrum, columns by the likes of Dave [illegible] Shoales, Joe Bob Briggs [illegible] Science, and coming in May [illegible] the heartbreaking final installments of *The Far Side!*

TEKNO

It's 2052 and the idyllic place known as New New York is about to get a rude awakening in the form of a hard-boiled detective who's had a rude awakening of his own. *Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger* is the story of a gumshoe who returns to the living after 100 years, only to learn that not "Everything is Beautiful." Max Allan Collins will bring Spillane's characters to life, with the help of artists Eduardo Barreto and Steve Leialoha and cover artist Frank Miller (who, we presume, will *not* draw the main character crashing through a window while carrying a gun in each hand).

Another distinguished novelist comes to comics in May with the debut of *John Jakes' Mulkon Empire*. Mulkon Industries is one of the great juggernauts of the business world, and the Mulkon family members are each out for their own agenda—all the while struggling to keep the family name clean. It's a look at the dark side of power from the creator of such emotional potboilers as *The Bastard* and *North and South*, courtesy of writer Kate Worley (*Omaha the Cat Dancer*) and artist John Watkiss (*Sandman Mystery Theatre*).

Oh, and *Neil Gaiman's Lady Justice* debuts in May, too, but you can learn more about that—and the rest of the Gaimanverse—on page 76.



The End Of The Far Side
COMIC RELIEF

ZONGO

He's worked with everyone from Art Spiegelman to Pee Wee Herman to Frank Zappa, and won the all-pervasive label of "influence." He's Gary Panter, and his *Jimbo* (last seen hanging around *Raw*) is heading back to comics, thanks to Matt Groening's new imprint! Zongo promises "an amazing counterculture comic experience!" You heard it here first, gang! ▲

ELLISON (cont. from page 33)

[illegible]

Jungle or [illegible] you can watch it on the level [illegible] you can catch all the [illegible] ▲

HOLLYWOOD HEROES

ANDY MANGELS'

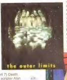
WHAT'S HAPPENING ON FILM, VIDEO AND TV

This month we've got several new genre TV series and a handful of movies to keep you entertained. Catch the most up-to-date, exclusive news right here!

DO NOT ADJUST YOUR SET

Showtime's hot, new *Outer Limits* series premieres on March 26, with a whopping 44 episodes ordered! The two-hour premiere is "Sandkings," starring Beau Bridges as a top-level research scientist who begins uncontrolled experimentation on dormant Martian eggs. Lloyd Bridges, Helen Shaver and Dylan Bridges also star. "Sandkings" is from a George R.R Martin story, and is scripted by his partner, Melinda Snodgrass

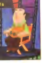
A revolutionary new "companion" robot may spell trouble for the paraplegic scientist Frank Hellner (William Sadler) in "Valerie 23" (March 31), especially when his relationship with physiotherapist Rachel Rose (Karen Allen) heats up. Then, a terrified billionaire (William Hickey) will do anything to escape his coming death, including trying Dr. Mac McEnerney's (Bruce Davison) experimental heart research. But in "White Light Fever" (April 7) Death has other plans. Comic scripter Alan Brennert brings us "The Second Soul" (April 14), a haunting tale in which aliens ask Earth for its dead to house the spirits from their dying bodies.



With stories like these, I bet *The Outer Limits* will be a big hit. The cable company is allowing MGM to syndicate the series as of fall 1995, giving only a seven-month window from cable to syndication!

IT STINKS NOT!

The late-lamented *The Critic* has returned, running at 8:30 p.m. EST on Sundays, following *The Simpsons*. That's a natural, given that the two shows are from the same creative studios. Jay Sherman, the acerbic movie critic of the title will also guest-star on *The Simpsons* as a judge of the Springfield film festival. Keen-eyed viewers should notice the art designs on the show have changed, a bit, with Jay slimming down a bit and other characters becoming more standardized



Upcoming *Critic* episodes include "Siskel & Ebert & Jay & Alice," guest-starring Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert (singing no less), Rex Reed and Gene Shalit, "Sherman Of Arabia," recounting Jay's adventures during the Gulf War, "All the Duke's Men," as Jay's boss runs for president and "I Can't Believe It's A Clips Show!," using clips from season one and guest-starring drag-meister Milton Berle as a ninja rescuer!

FOX "KIDS" FALL SCHEDULE

The new FOX Saturday morning schedule, starting mid-September, is as follows

8:00 a.m.—*Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* (Saban, third season)

8:30 a.m.—*Masked Rider*, a *Morphin* spin-off series. (Saban, new)

9:00 a.m.—*Eek!stravaganza* (Nelvana, fourth season)

9:30 a.m.—*Life With Louie*, "based on the offbeat childhood experiences of comedian Louie Anderson." (new)

10:00 a.m.—*Spider-Man* (Marvel, second season)

10:30 a.m.—*The Tick*, with 13 new episodes. (Sunbow, second season)

11:00 a.m.—*X-Men*, with 29 new episodes. (Saban, fourth season)

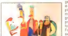
11:30 a.m.—*Where In the World is Carmen SanDiego?* (DIC, third season)

Gone from Saturdays are Nelvana's *Jim Henson's Dog City*, Warner's *Steven Spielberg Presents Animaniacs* and *The Adventures of Batman & Robin*.

[illegible] weekday morning lineup [illegible] *Bobbys' World* (7:30 a.m.), [illegible]-action *FOX's Clubhouse* [illegible] FOX's weekday afternoon [illegible] include *X-Men* (3 p.m., with [illegible] new episodes), *Taz-Mania* [illegible]0 p.m.), *The Adventures of Batman & Robin* (4 p.m., with the [illegible]ing—and possibly some [illegible]des) and *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* (4:30 p.m.). FOX [illegible] that even though both [illegible]'s *CyberForce* and Rob [illegible] *Youngblood* cartoons aren't [illegible] fall schedule, they are in [illegible]lopment and may be mid-[illegible] replacements. Other potential [illegible] include Universal's [illegible]rtoon, Saban's *Morphin* [illegible] *CyberTron* and an animated *Planet of the Apes* series.

DUCKMAN REDUX

The [illegible] funny *Duckman* began [illegible] marry him in [illegible]ve" (March 18), [illegible]n and [illegible]ng undercover [illegible]y detox center [illegible] Whining and [illegible] March 25) [illegible]ken (Tim [illegible] and puts [illegible] trial in [illegible] Judgment: The [illegible] (April 1 at [illegible] and June Lockhart and [illegible]lear lend their voices to [illegible] "America the Beautiful" [illegible] Duckman falls in love [illegible]n named America [illegible] Germ Turns" (April 15), [illegible] the spirit of Duckman's [illegible]r or a host of New Age [illegible] Asner and the hilarious [illegible] Garofalo (*The Larry Sanders Show*, *Saturday Night Live*) guest-[illegible]me around.



ABC

[illegible] March 19, there're only [illegible] second season episodes of *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures Of Superman* left to air. No good superhero series would be complete without a time-travel episode. "Tempus Fugitive" (March 26) finds Lois and Clark traveling back in time to save Superman's life. But wait a minute. Aren't Clark and Superman one and the same? A hint: Lois finds out a big secret before the episode's end! In "Target: Jimmy Olsen" (April 2), a mother and daughter find out that Jimmy and several others were used in a military mind-control experiment when they were children. Now, they activate Jimmy to be an assassin! And in what could be seen as a *Spider-M.A.N.T.I.S.* crossover, Superman is bitten by a radioactive bug and begins to mutate in "Joey the Bug" (April 16)!

CBS

Despite a press junket in which CBS President of Entertainment Peter Tortorici, called for "a new generation of hits," CBS is continuing to completely shut out the genre market in nighttime programming. Of the many projects in development for fall '95, only Francis Ford Coppola's new version of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped* and a miniseries of Dean R. Koontz's *Dark Rivers of the Heart* even edge close to genre territory. It's too bad CBS is choosing to ignore a very large portion of the TV audience.

NBC

Not much news on *Earth 2* this month. A new episode will appear on March 19

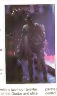
Due to a high number of preemptions, fans of *seaQuest DSV* will be able to watch new episodes through the spring. In "Something in the Air," scientists hope to prove the existence of God, only to accidentally open a Pandora's Box of evil. Dagger Mariah is freed from prison by the mad nuclear physicist, the Marauder, in "Dagger Redux," and together, they create a killer squid-shaped submarine that feeds off the biogenetic skin of the seaQuest.

FOX

The reruns have begun for the new animated *Spider-Man*. If you missed them the first time out, look for "The Spider-Slayer" (March 18), and "The Return of the Spider-Slayers" (March 25).

Production problems have delayed the final two *X-Men* episodes for this season: "No Mutant Is an Island" and "Longshot." FOX is promising that they'll appear for May sweeps.

Will *M.A.N.T.I.S.* disappear into the night earlier than expected? The final season episode, "Ghost in the Ice," finds M.A.N.T.I.S. doing battle with an invisible beast from the past. At FOX's request, the episode ends in an explosive cliff-hanger! But when will you see it? Who knows? FOX is replacing *M.A.N.T.I.S.* with *VR 5*, and at press time did not know when—or if—the final show would be aired. However, FOX is looking into ways to save the series and bring it back for a second season next fall.



On FOX's development slate for fall are quite a number of genre series, including *Doctor Who*, starting with a two-hour telefilm with the origin of the Doctor and utilizing the Daleks, Davros, and the Master; *Space*, with a young cast facing space adventures (*Melrose Place* meets *Star Wars*); *White Dwarf*, an hour-long futuristic drama; *Kindred*, a *Godfather*-like saga about a family of vampires; Laurel Entertainment's miniseries revival of the '60s sci-fi series *The Invaders* and an *X-Files* spin-off series. FOX is also supposedly looking at Steven Grant's *Enemy* (from Dark Horse Comics) as a series.

SYNDICATED AND CABLE

Sam Kieth's *The Maxx* has been delayed (yet again) from its premiere on *MTV Oddities*. It will be a part of "MTV's Animation Weekend" April 8 before moving to its regular time slot on Monday, April 10. Reruns of Eric Fogel's bizarre *The Head* will appear on *Oddities* until then.

Warner Animation is back to work on a superhero, but this one's no surprise. *Superman* is in development for fall 1996, with Bruce Timm and Paul Dini producing the big red cape. "It's all happening very slowly," says Dini. "There's been no official go-ahead on the project, but Warner has told us they want it. Bruce Timm has done a set of model sheets in the *Batman*-style, but we haven't settled on a look for the series. It's likely that work will begin this summer, or by the end of the year at the very least." Timm and Dini are now working on 13 episodes of the all-new *Freakazoid!* series we talked about last issue. The half-hour *Superman* series is likely to air on the Warner network.

Other superhero series Warner development had thrown about—and dropped—include *Angel and the Ape* (Bruce Timm and Paul Dini), *Green Lantern*, *Hawkman*, *Robin* and *Catwoman*. (The latter two may eventually be revived.) FOX is making noise about more *Batman* episodes or spin-offs before their contract expires in fall 1997. Warner is committed to produce two more series for FOX over the next three years.

Star Trek: Voyager has become my favorite *Star Trek* series, largely due to the disparate personalities and the resulting conflict. If you haven't been watching, give this one a try. Kate Mulgrew sounds like a Muppet, but she gets to deliver threats that would curl the toes of any previous *Trek* captain. Coming up are "Prime Factors" (March 20), and a rerun of "Parallax" (March 27). April brings new episodes on the 3rd, 17th, and 24th, with a preemption on the 10th. At least one of the shows will be "State of Flux."

Star Trek Deep Space Nine will air reruns through April 3. Then Bashir faces an angry alien telepath who puts him into a world of nightmares in "Distant Voices" (April 10), before the cast takes a trip through alternate reality in "Through the Looking Glass" (April 17). A two-part episode follows.

USA's one-hour *TekWar* series continues its run, a repeat of "Alter Ego" appears March 20 and the secrets of "Carlotta's Room" plays on March 27. The weekend of April 8-9 guarantees lots of Tek for addicts. April 8 will be three *TekWar* telefilms: *TekWar*, *TekLord* and *TekLab*. April 9 will have the final telefilm, *TekJustice*, plus the first seven episodes of the *TekWar* series in a minimarathon! Mama Evegan will be so proud.

On one of my favorite hours on the Sci-Fi Channel, the *Sci-Fi Series Collection*, look for Parker Stevenson in *Probe* (March 8-27), the quirky Wes Craven show, *Nightmare Café* (March 28 to April 4), and the buddy cop/alien show *Something Is Out There* (April 5-27). Also, look for the cult hit, *She-Wolf of London* to show up sometime soon.

I'll be seeing you again ... reruns rule the roost on *Babylon 5*, *Highlander*, *Forever Knight* and *Phantom 2040*.

COMIC FILMS (Quick Notes)

WildStorm Productions has announced a direct-to-video release of an animated *Gen¹³* feature, to be produced by the new WildStorm Pictures. [illegible]en, a longtime animated [illegible] director, will be directing the [illegible] project. The *Gen¹³* video-[illegible] adapt the first miniseries in an [illegible]on. "This isn't like children's [illegible]ming, where you have to pull [illegible]es," said Alteri. "This is the [illegible] *Gen¹³* is planned for a [illegible] release.

[illegible] rumored to be making a [illegible] *Rune* feature film.

[illegible]rd at the Dark Horse [illegible] party from Michael Allred to [illegible]rdson: "I think Eric Stoltz [illegible] the best Madman." [illegible] on whether a *Madman* film is in the [illegible].

[illegible] Dark Horse [illegible] Anderson, [illegible] star of [illegible] has signed [illegible] the busty [illegible] *Wire* in the [illegible]ark Horse [illegible]/Largo [illegible]ve it or not, [illegible] film in late spring [illegible]mber '95 release!

[illegible]ssell (*The Mask*) [illegible] on to helm a *Silver* [illegible] now in development.

[illegible]uvan and Ben Melnicker [illegible] back *The Spirit* for a live-[illegible] film.

[illegible] be weirder than a [illegible] film? I don't know. Bruce [illegible] directing for Yorktown [illegible].

[illegible] Hurd is shepherding the [illegible] film at Universal, and [illegible] seems to be picking up [illegible].

New [illegible] Cinema is planning a [illegible] *Mutant Ninja Turtles* [illegible], this one to be solely pro-[illegible]nsed and distributed by the [illegible]ontract, signed in July [illegible] New Line and Mirage [illegible]s the film company the [illegible]ure sequels as well. The [illegible] be redesigned for the [illegible] though no word on what [illegible] entails. Meanwhile, [illegible] planning an animated [illegible].

[illegible]els, who starred in the [illegible] minimovie of *Hardcase*, [illegible] another comic-book [illegible] This time, he's in *The Fist of* [illegible], based on the Japanese [illegible] Randel is directing the [illegible] Overseas Filmgroup.

[illegible] FILMS

[illegible] Donald Pleasance died [illegible]. Pleasance had [illegible] Blofeld in *You Only Live* [illegible] in *Fantastic Voyage* [illegible]sive psychiatrist in five *Halloween* films. He was working on *Halloween VI* for Miramax, when he died of heart complications.

Comic legend Jim Starlin and wife Daina Graziunas made a killing with Warner and Amblin recently when they sold the book and film rights to their novel, *Thinning the Predators*. It's the story of a serial killer who begins hunting other serial killers. The rights went for a cool $2 million!

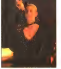
Caravan Pictures is stretching ahead with their improbable toy-based film. Yes, Virginia, *Stretch Armstrong* will be directed by William Dear (*Angels in the Outfield*), from a script now being rewritten by Jim Ferguson and Bob Shallcross (*Little Giants*). Whether this will take the bounce out of any upcoming *Plastic Man* movie if it bombs (as *Man From Atlantis* poisoned the waters for *Aquaman* projects) will be seen next year.

Premiere dates to mark on your calendars:

March 17: *Candyman: Farewell to the Flesh* stars Tony Todd as the tragic Daniel Robitaille, who haunts mirrors as the hook-handed Candyman. When Annie Tarrant (Kelly Rowan) explores the history of her family, she finds murder and madness in the past, and in the present. Somehow, this movie got a PG-13 rating!

March 24: Stephen King's *Dolores Claiborne* stars Kathy Bates as a woman accused of murder and Jennifer Jason Leigh as her journalist daughter who is forced to confront her mother and her past.

March 24: MGM/UA's *Tank Girl*, stars Lori Petty as Rebecca Buck, a



nihilistic rock 'n' roll heroine in a post-cataclysmic world. Malcolm McDowell is the villainous Kesslee, and Naomi Watts is Tank Girl's best friend Jet Girl.

March 24: *Hellraiser 4: Bloodlines* features Doug Bradley returning to the role of Pinhead in a story that finds him stalking a family through pre-revolutionary France, modern America and a future space colony.

March 31: Don Bluth's animated *The Pebble and the Penguin* tells the story of a shy penguin who must find a magic pebble for his girlfriend before he loses her to a villainous penguin. Martin Short, Tim Curry, Annie Golden and James Belushi lend their voices.

April 7: Disney's *The Goofy Movie*, the first feature film for their "Is-it-a dog-or-what?" creature.

April 12: Savoy's *Dr Jekyll and Ms Hyde*, is a comedy starring Tim Daly and the indomitable Sean Young in the title role. That was not a syntax error; Jekyll's architect girlfriend (Lysette Anthony) thinks that Jekyll's potion causes a trans-sexual reversal!

VIDEO & MUSIC

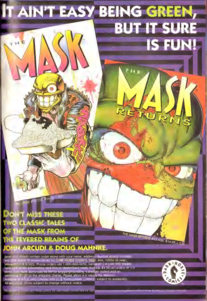
Sony is releasing *Ren & Stimpy: Incredibly Stupid Stones* on March 21, with "An Abe Divided," "Jimmy Lummox," "Rubber Nipple Salesmen" and commercials for Cheesefist and Flod. Fisterrific!

Full Moon's family line, Moonbeam, gives us a visit to the *Pet Shop* on March 28. This cute kid's film follows a pair of pranksterish aliens who overtake a pet shop in a small desert town on Earth. Will the kids be victims of their pranks, or will the alien pets help them?

TV soundtracks are becoming more prevalent in the industry. Christopher Franke's *Babylon 5* (Sonic Images) is due in February or March; Mark Snow's *The X-Files* (FOX) is forthcoming; John Debney's *seaQuest DSV* (Varese-Sarabande) is due early this year. For a great listing of film scores and soundtracks, check out *Film Score Monthly* c/o Pearson Publishing, PO Box 360, Sea Cliff, NY 11579. A subscription runs $9 for six months, $18 for a year. It's well worth it. Tell 'em *Andy Mangels' Hollywood Heroes* sent you!

NEXT MONTH

Coming up in *Andy Mangels' Hollywood Heroes*, what do the other networks have planned for the fall? And what about those big summer films? More exclusives in 30 days ... here at *Hollywood Heroes!* ▲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ANIME ACTION PLUS

THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN AND BEYOND

by Roy Ware

BEETLE-MANIA STRIKES AGAIN IN JAPAN!

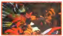
NEW WAVE OF BUG-HEADED HEROES REMINISCENT OF ACTION-FILLED PAST!

In the last five years, Toei has released a series of very boring, slow-paced, live-action shows, known as "rescue shows." (*Winspector, Solbrain*, etc.) These programs had awesome-looking heroes who did virtually nothing (no action, no monsters)—unlike their '80s predecessors, the *Space Sheriff* (*Uchu Keiji*) series (which had so much action you were always on the edge of your seat). After last year's lethargic *Blue Swat* (yawn), Toei Co. has finally gotten out of its rut. This year's *Zyukou B-Fighter* (Heavy Armor Beetle Fighter) is reminiscent of the great action-filled old days. This new teleseries contains cool looking heroes, loads of action and tons of monster bashing.

The story starts with Earth being invaded by aliens (who else?) known as the Jyamaru, who come from another dimension in space. Led by the evil Gaomu, monsters and henchmen are sent to take over Earth. Meanwhile, Prof. Mukai Hakase is developing an armored suit (called Biomachinery) to ward off the invasion. Everything that could go wrong with the armor does, until a muppet-like beetle character named Guru shows up. Guru puts a little magic into the suits to give them power. Each suit is then contained in a hand-held device known as the B-Commander, which is used to apply the armor to human bodies. Two young men and one young woman are chosen to wear the suits. Kai Takuya becomes Blue Beetle, Kata Jindaisau becomes Ji-Stag (green) and Haya Rai becomes Redder. Each hero also has spec[illegible] beetle-like vehicles, Beetle-Ruda, Stag-Tank and Red-Gyro (for that important complementary toy line). The B-Fighter weapons include the Input Magnum, a laser gun in which you can type in a code for each different kind of laser, the Sting[illegible] Weapons-Stinger Blade, Stinger Claw and Stinger Plasma.

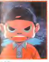
The B-Fighters battle a new monster in each episode. During that battle, Gaomu will pull the B-Fighters and the monste[illegible] into the Gaomu Zone, a surreal world where anything can happen (similar to *Space Sheriffs*). After the monster is defeate[illegible] the B-Fighters return to the normal world. *B-Fighter* is definitely a step in the right direction. Let's hope Toei stays on this exciting new (yet pleasingly familiar) path.

YOW! IT'S THE DEMON GOD ZENKI!



[illegible] like Hong Kong's frenetic fanta- [illegible] Go Nagai's *Devilman*, you'll [illegible] *Douji Zenki* (Demon God [illegible]). *Zenki* takes place in mod- [illegible] where, even though times [illegible] changed, the old timers still pass [illegible] of the past to their descen- [illegible] is the case with Chiaki Enno, [illegible] practices her old rituals and magic [illegible]. When Chiaki and her family [illegible] attacked by a demon, Chiaki's mother summons the Demon God Zenki to [illegible] them. Zenki arrives from beyond the gates of hell in child form and cannot [illegible] the demon's power. Chiaki soon acquires a magic bracelet that releases [illegible] power into adult form, enabling him to defeat the menace. Though [illegible] Chiaki is able to control Zenki with the bracelet and return him to his [illegible] The series eventually revolves around Chiaki and her family battling [illegible] priests—Guren, Karuma and Goura who spawn evil demons into our [illegible] series offers a ton of Japan's mythic culture and loads of action

WHAT? NO NINJA PIGS?



The new anime teleseries follows the misadventures of a young boy named Fusuke, and his pet penguin. Fusuke is a Ninku, a ninja spy who can vanish into thin air. (If shot at, he can move so quickly it seems as if he has disappeared.) Fusuke meets two other young Ninku: Aicho (who can fly) and Touji (who can disperse surges of energy). Together, the three battle an evil army, led by a corrupt leader bent on wiping out the Ninku clan so they can take over the country. This show has many dramatic, serious moments, though there is comedy to lighten up the events. *Ninku* conjures up memories of 1982's *Sasuga no Sarutobi*

KAMEN RIDER COMES TO AMERICA

In the past two years, Saban has ruined every Japanese hero show they got their hands on, like Zyuranger, Dairanger, Spellban and Metalder. They are about to cut up Kakuranger (for the *Power Rangers* movie and third season). What's next on the chopping block? This fall Saban will release *Masked Rider* (the destruction of the Toei teleseries *Kamen Rider Black RX*). *Kamen Rider Black RX* is from 1989 and was a sequel to the great series *Kamen Rider Black*.

Masked Rider is the story of an invasion by aliens (known as Crises) led by Jak Shogun. The Crises capture Kotaro Minami (alter ego of Kamen Rider Black), for he is the only obstacle between them and world conquest. [illegible] escapes but his King Stone (the object that lets him become a [illegible]) split in half. Falling back toward Earth, Kotaro absorbs the sun's rays [illegible] back down to Japan in a fiery explosion. Out of the flames Kotaro [illegible] Kamen Rider Black RX. Now he is able to use the solar power of the [illegible] become two other Kamen Rider forms. When he's sad, he can become [illegible]ler. When he's angry, he can become Bio Rider. The RX series also [illegible] return of Shadow Moon, an extremely popular Kamen Rider Black [illegible] RX series was aimed toward a younger crowd than the previous series [illegible] was considerably more serious and dramatic). It was rare for a series to [illegible] into a second season with the same star, but Tetsuo Kurata is a fine [illegible] well as just being very likable. He even sang the theme song! It's sad [illegible] in the U.S. version. You're probably wondering why, if the show was [illegible] Saban feels they must tamper with it. My guess is that Saban thinks [illegible] are stupid and can't handle the original with its twists and turns.

ANIME VIDEO CHECKLIST

This is a listing of American video releases of Japanese anime for the next few months. We will update this list each month with release dates when available (and all dates are subject to change ... so relax).

A.D. Vision
☐ *801 T.T.S. Airbats* 85m. Subtitled VHS 7/18/95
☐ *All Purpose Cultural Cat Girl Nuku Nuku Volume 1* 60m. Subtitled VHS 5/9/95
☐ *All Purpose Cultural Cat Girl Nuku Nuku, Volume 2* 60m. Subtitled VHS 6/13/95
☐ *All Purpose Cultural Cat Girl Nuku Nuku Volume 3* 60m. Subtitled VHS 7/11/95
☐ *Kekkou Kamen Vol. 2* 55m. Subtitled Adult VHS 4/4/95
☐ *Sol Bianca* 60m. Subtitled VHS 7/11/95

AnimEigo
☐ *Arcadia of My Youth* (Classic Captain Harlock Uncut!) 130m. Subtitled LD 3/29/95
☐ *Bubblegum Crisis #7-Double Vision* 49m. Dubbed VHS 4/26/95
☐ *Bubblegum Crisis #8-Scoop Chase* 47m. Dubbed VHS 4/26/95
☐ *Bubblegum Crisis Universe LD set* Dubbed LD 2/22/95
☐ *RUPAN III: The Fuma Conspiracy* (a.k.a. Lupin III) 73m. Subtitled VHS or LD 2/22/95
☐ *RUPAN III: The Fuma Conspiracy* (a.k.a. Lupin III) 73m. Dubbed VHS 3/29/95
☐ *RUPAN III: Legend of the Gold of Babylon* 100m. Subtitled VHS or LD 3/29/95
☐ *Those Obnoxious Aliens* (Lum in English!) 50m. Dubbed VHS 3/29/95

Central Park Media
☐ *Animated Classics of Japanese Literature A Roadside Stone* 52m. Subtitled VHS 4/4/95
☐ *Animated Classics of Japanese Literature Botchan, Parts 1 & 2* 52m. Subtitled VHS 4/4/95
☐ *Animated Classics of Japanese Literature: The Incident in the Bedroom/Voice From Heaven* 52m. Subtitled VHS 4/4/95
☐ *Animated Classics of Japanese Literature: The Martyr/The Priest of Mt. Kouya* 52m. Subtitled VHS 4/4/95
☐ *Animated Classics of Japanese Literature: The Tale of Shunkin/Friendship* 52m. Subtitled VHS 4/4/95

Dark Image Entertainment
☐ *Ambassador Magma* 60m. (Contains episodes 8 & 9) Dubbed VHS 4/19/95

Manga Entertainment (all are English language versions)
☐ *Appleseed* 70m. VHS 2/28/95
☐ *Black Magic M-66* 48m. Dubbed VHS 3/21/95
☐ *Devilman #1* 5/95
☐ *Devilman #2* 5/95
☐ *Dominion II Vol. 1* 4/95
☐ *Dominion II Vol. 2* 7/95
☐ *Dominion II Vol. 3* 9/95
☐ *Giant Robo Vol. 1* 4/95
☐ *Giant Robo Vol. 2* 6/95
☐ *Giant Robo Vol. 3* 8/95
☐ *Giant Robo Vol. 4* 10/95
☐ *Macross II (Movie)* 4/95
☐ *Macross II CD-ROM* 4/95
☐ *Macross Plus Vol. 1* 45m. VHS 2/28/95
☐ *Macross Plus Vol. 2* 5/95
☐ *Macross Plus Vol. 3* 8/95
☐ *Macross Plus Vol. 4* 10/95
☐ *Patlabor 1 (Movie)* 7/95
☐ *Orguss 02 Vol. 1* 60m. Dubb 3/95
☐ *Wings Of Honneamise* 6/95

Pioneer Animation
☐ *Armitage the 3rd, Part 1 Electro Blood* 45m. Subtitled V & LD, Dubbed VHS & LD 3/28/
☐ *Kishin Heidan, Volume 3* 60m Subtitled VHS or LD. Dubbed VHS or LD 3/28/95
☐ *Tenchi Muyo Mihoshi Specia* 30m. Subtitled VHS & LD, Dubbed VHS & LD 2/28/95

The Right Stuf
☐ *Toward The Terra* 112m Subtitled Widescreen LD 4/18/9
☐ *Toward The Terra* 112m Subtitled VHS 4/18/95

SoftCel
☐ *Twin Dolls, Vol. 1* 50m. Adul Subtitled VHS 5/9/95
☐ *Twin Dolls Vol. 2* 50m. Adult Subtitled VH 6/14/95

U.S. Manga Corps
☐ *Adventure Kid, Volume 2* 40m. Subtitled VH 4/4/95
☐ *Detonator Orgun Part 3* 53m. Subtitled VHS 3/7/95
☐ *Genocyber Part 1, Birth of Genocyber* 46m Subtitled LD 1/25/95
☐ *Iczer 3 Vol. 3* 60m. Subtitled VHS 1995

☐ *MD Geist* 45m. The cult OV love in English! VHS 3/7/95
☐ *Project A-ko Vs. Battle One Grey Side* 54m. Dubbed VHS
☐ *Project A-Ko vs. Battle 2: B Side* 53m. Dubbed VHS 4/4/9
☐ *Record of Lodoss War, Vol* 66m. Subtitled & Dubbed VHS 3/7/95
☐ *Record of Lodoss War, Vol* Subtitled & Dubbed VHS 5/2/
☐ *Record of Lodoss War, Vol* Subtitled & Dubbed VHS 7/11
☐ *Record of Lodoss War, Vol* Subtitled & Dubbed VHS 9/5/
☐ *Record of Lodoss War, Vol* Subtitled & Dubbed VHS 11/2
☐ *Record of Lodoss War, Vol* 86m. Subtitled & Dubbed VH 11/7/95
☐ *Tokyo Babylon 1* 52m. Subtitled VHS 4/4/95
☐ *Tokyo Babylon 1* 52m. Dub VHS 4/4/95

Viz Video
☐ *Fatal Fury* 50 m. Dubbed VHS 3/1/95
☐ *Ranma 1/2 Anything Goes Martial Arts-"Darling Charlotte"* 52m. Dubbed VHS 3/15/
☐ *Ranma 1/2 TV Series #9* 52m. Dubbed VH

HERO INSIDER

IN A FLASH:
...HEY, MISTER, HOW MUCH IS THIS PARTY GONNA BE WORTH? ... A TALE TO ASTONISH ... A BIG MAN VISITS THE BIG D: WHY? ... WHO WANTS TO RUN OUR CAPITAL? ... VIVA LAS VEGAS!...

., the ol' MFB just flew in from the Great Eastern Con, and boy was the booze pensive! Seriously, it looks as though the economic hardlining this biz has been retting over is finally coming to light. To wit: Seems a certain large company was eet enough to send out invites to a number of pros for your average Big Company rty. Don't have an invite? Hey, that's OK, come on in anyway.... Oh, BTW, that'll 15 bucks.... Of course, look at the Big Company's side of things: You can't have any old riffraff walking in—after all, these are *comic book people* here!...

t that I have to really search for such things, but here's the cheapest laugh turly has gotten this month, courtesy of a well-known solicitation catalog. here are books that many retailers carry that do not pay the bills or sell in rge quantity. Many of these titles are only carried because the owner or manager rsonally likes them or the industry has beaten them over the head that they must rry the books because they are 'alternative,' 'creator-owned,' or 'small press' les." In other words, you storeowners can save *all that money* you've been pouring into the Fantagraphics and Slave Labor coffers and actually put that dough ere it'll do you some good ... like 75 copies of *Darkhawk* or *Blaze*. Hey, is that chemical plant I smell or did somebody just yawn...?

d has it that a certain stinky [illegible] man likes a recently spawned toy line so h. he bought into the company! [illegible] hope he likes dusting...

m the city so nice, they blacked it out twice, [illegible] word that a certain big rse was in town during the Toy Fair, which made sense. Seeing him a few days ter hanging around the offices of the Big D *didn't*.... Speaking of the Big D, ap chatter abounds that they're in fierce competition with their cross-town als to see who'll be the T.C. Rider. The end result will probably answer that rnal question: Are comics more like broccoli or loaves of bread?...

fusion runs rampant as whispers abound about an exclusive distribution deal for ouple of the big boys. One story would have us believe that some of them just t to go through one top-heavy distributor. (Well, so much for a commitment to panding the market.) On the other hand, you hear strange stories about that one tributor (who seems more interested in publishing than distributing) and their ro to acquire the rights to publishing a high-profile line of books. Nope, they 't get those licenses, they would *be* licensees. Once again, this would help just t no one ...

it true that when a certain big-shot told a certain company to "piss off," he ht have meant it a little more than was suspected...?

Vegas line tells me that Eddie the Shill's prediction of *Fan* getting the Gem rd pays off big. Who woulda thunk it? Congratulations gamblers! I'd love to re in your newfound wealth, but I've gotta go find the guy who told me to invest ything in Barings PLC...

-MYSTERY FAN BOY

REVIEWS

Frank "Bluto" Kurtz

Ironically, Frank is known less for his comic *Creepsville* than for his role as TV's Frankenberry

Rob "D-Day" Holly

Rob made this face long enough, and it stuck. He can't say his parents didn't warn him.

Joe "Boone" Fielder

Following Dr. Druid's lead, Joe faked his own death to shirk membership in the Secret Defenders. Loser

Steve "Stork" Darnall

Is notorious for stopping strangers outside of Best Buy and screaming "Read *Empty Love Stories*!"

Scott "Flounder" Grenke

Is notorious for stopping strangers outside of Best Buy and screaming "I'm a rat! Dear God, I'm a rat!"

Chris "Pinto" Ecker

Chris is a newcomer to our review crew, and as such, still has a mind and spirit of his own. We'll fix that.

Steve "Otter" Spaulding

Steve hasn't seen his face in print since his last visit to the United States Post Office.

CREATOR PICKS

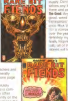
Here are a few comics that are bugging the eyes of some industry professionals:

John Mitchell, writer, *Very Vicky*: "I like *Acme Novelty Library* and *Wolff and Byrd*. Oh, and *AKA Goldfish*."

Rick Veitch, writer/artist, *Roarin' Rick's Rare-Bit Fiends*: "*Cerebus* and *Tyrant*, and that's not just a plug. I'm reading *Jax* and loving that. I'm still loving *Sandman*: *Love & Rockets*, *Bizarre Heroes*, *THB*."

Mike Wieringo, artist, *Robin*: "Let's see ... *Bone*, *Eightball*, when it comes out. *Bone*. I try to pick up everything, but I only *read* the alternative stuff."

ROARIN' RICK'S RARE BIT FIENDS



In A Flash: Inspired by the old Windsor McKay "Dreams of the Rare Bit Fiend" strips, Roarin' Rick Veitch has put together a monthly series that takes readers into the darkest recesses of his mind, with often hilarious results. Each issue of *Roarin' Rick's Rare Bit Fiends* showcases a wide variety of Veitch's most bizarre dreams, many involving comic book characters and creators, and generally averaging about one page each in length.

Is It Worth It: Absolutely.

Rare Bit Fiends is completely unlike any other comic book currently on the market, and considering the dross clogging the shelves these days, that's a very good thing, indeed. This is a superbly crafted series that not only gives us some dazzling insight into the wonderfully imaginative mind of one of comicdom's great talents of the last dozen or so years, but it also serves as a sort of kaleidoscopic view of contemporary pop culture.

Anyone who has ever had dreams about creating comics, being a superhero, learning how to fly, meeting famous and historical figures or hanging out with Neil Gaiman, Steve Bissette, Alan Moore and Dave Sim will immediately relate to these stories. And heck, even if your dreams have *nothing at all* in common with Roarin' Rick's, you're still going to get a kick out of them.

Every page of *Rare Bit Fiends* is brimming with enthusiasm, so I can only imagine how much fun Rick is having with this puppy. Don't deprive yourselves any longer—get out there and pick this book up.

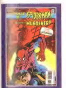
The Good: Anybody who loves good, weird fun owes it to themselves to give this book a shot. Rick Veitch has turned out a number of killer projects over the years, but this one is definitely my favorite. This is really inspired stuff and practically all of these one page stories will leave you clamoring for more.

The Bad: Considering the lavish amounts of praise I've heaped on the book, I nevertheless have a couple minor complaints—it's too bloody short and it should be out as a bi-weekly. No, make that weekly...

The Ugly: The results of Jerry Lewis' double-chin reduction surgery. Eeeuuw!

—*Eric Stephenson*, *writer*, Newmen, Team Youngblood, Brigade.

Publisher:	King Hell
Writer/Artist:	Rick Veitch
Cover Price:	$2.95
Enhancements:	None
Other Notes:	Rick Veitch's new creator-owned project.



WHAT IF...
SPIDER-MAN
MURDERER?

WHAT IF...

Publisher:	Marvel Comics
Issue Reviewed:	#72
Writer:	Simon Furman
Artist:	Craig Brasfield
Inker:	Bob Almond
Color:	Bob Sharen
Cover Price:	$1.50
Enhancements:	None

In A Flash: *What If... Spider-Man Became a Murderer?* Ever wonder what would have happened if Peter Parker would have killed the thug who murdered his Uncle Ben? Well, now you can see for yourself. See Spidey's torment over beating a man to death with his own hands, and his struggle to deal with the powers in the face of guilt. Throw in a couple of legendary supervillains (Sandman and the Lizard) and you have a character line-up good enough to play for the Cubs.

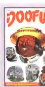
Is It Worth It: Sure. The story is hokey, but comics are supposed to be fun. Let's not over intellectualize it. The strength of the *What If...* series has always been fun stories, outside of the Marvel continuity.

The Good: It's been a while since I read a book like this. I almost forgot how nice it is to NOT have to go looking for the issue the story is continued in.

The Bad: The art is supposed to look like the wonderful Ditko stuff from days gone by, but at times it becomes confused and inconsistent. Still, these days it's nice to see Spider-Man drawn by someone other than a McFarlane wanna-be.

The Ugly: Sandman puddle.

—*Marc Camron*



DOOFUS

Publisher:	Fantagraphics
Issue Reviewed:	#1
Writer/Artist:	Rick Altergott
Cover Price:	$2.75
Enhancements:	None
Other Notes:	Mature readers label, contains nudity and adult situations.

In A Flash: Doofus and his pal Henry Hotchkiss travel the streets of Flowertown, USA, observing and commenting on the human condition and then retire to Doofus' basement for a manly game of strip poker.

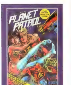
Is it worth it: Yes! Doofus has a kind of *Leave it to Beaver* sense of humor to it. Some of the strips have punch lines and others are funny without being *jokey*. Aside from the Doofus strips, there is a pseudo-superhero story called "Team America" (no, NOT Marvel's), done in an art style that's a cross between the late Wally Wood's humorous and heroic work.

The Good: *Doofus* is a funny, hip, adult comic that doesn't make me feel like an outsider. You don't need a translator to get the jokes.

The Bad: There isn't much that you can say is bad here, unless you're too young to buy Mature comics.

The Ugly: Doofus and Henry Hotchkiss using cast-off underwear to play naked games in the basement. Ugh!

—*Chris Ecker*



PLANET PATROL

Publisher:	Ego Publishing Co.
Issue Reviewed:	#1
Creator:	Bruce David
Color:	Black-and-white.
Cover Price:	$2.95
Enhancements:	Comes with a cut-out space gun. Inside is an offer for a 3-D card, a cut-out wrist communicator and a "Planet Patrol" badge.

In A Flash: Captain Britt Burton of the Planet Patrol and his crew crash-land on an asteroid, where they find a woman frozen in suspension.

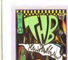
Is It Worth It: Uh, no, Peg. Bruce David explains that he wants to do a book based on the old sci-fi serials of yesteryear (complete with cliffhangers) spiced up with today's humor. Unfortunately, it doesn't work. For one thing, the art is very amateurish (including the fantasy drawing of three women on the back cover—that's right, circles are fun to draw). And if you're going to attempt a humor book, one lesson to learn is the difference between written humor and spoken humor. Often what sounds funny looks extremely lame in print, as is often the case with this book. It's as if he's writing a movie script, not a comic book. The lines are as subtle as a brick.

The Good: The wrist communicator, the Planet Patrol badge (free mail-in offer) and the Space Gun. Those goofy premiums almost make the book worth the price of admission.

The Bad: "Babes in Space" is so bad it's painful.

The Ugly: $2.95 for a paper Space Gun.

—*Rob Holly*



THB

Publisher:	**Heron Press**
Issue Reviewed:	**#5**
Creator:	**Paul Pope**
Cover Price:	**$2.95**
Enhancements:	**None**
Other Notes:	**Black-and-white, eight-issue miniseries.**

In A Flash: The place: Mars; P-City to be precise. HR Watson wakes up at the Jiggler's place and wants to see how Martians refine mud sugar. However, danger lurks in the canals, and HR must call upon the services of her chemical bodyguard, THB

Is It Worth It: Hot dog, you bet! Each issue is brilliant. THB is a roller-coaster ride with a variety of different art styles and storytelling techniques that Pope wields like a master. This could have been a one-trick idea focused on the wonderful creation of the girl's bodyguard, Tri Hydro Bioxygenate (THB to its friends). Instead, Pope's created a complex, yet true-to-her-age person in the form of HR Watson, daughter of a very prominent scientist. The world he's built on Mars is a magical, faraway place that seems as real as any town. The main story bursts with action and suspense, and a little element of sci-fi without being too futuristic. Interspersed are one-pagers and short stories with a wacky charm all their own. Simply put, this is one of the top five books on the market.

The Good: Paul Pope is the next Alan Moore. Mark my words, he's *that* good.

The Bad: Word is buzzing about this book, so find them now before they're gone.

The Ugly: At a mere $2.95 this is the best-kept secret in the comics industry.

—Rob Holly

MIKE GRELL
STARSLAYER

STARSLAYER: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

Publisher:	**Acclaim**
Issue Reviewed:	**#'s1 & 2**
Creator:	**Mike Grell**
Cover Price:	**$2.50**
Enhancements:	**None**
Other Notes:	**Part of Valiant's Windjammer imprint.**

In A Flash: The starship *Jolly Roger* (carrying Torin Mac Quillon, Tamara and their wisecracking robot, Sam) stops at the Tao VII spaceport where they get into a fight in the bar and are asked to leave. That's it for the first issue.

The second issue tells the story of Torin as he existed before the Romans invaded the British Isles.

Are They worth it: Well, if you can't find or afford the original Pacific Comics editions and you want to read the enjoyable *Starslayer* saga, borrow a friend's copies. The first two issues look rather cobbled together; Logos are missing, art styles change from page to page, some of the coloring looks like it was done with a crayon (and not always inside the lines) and there even seems to be some information missing.

The Good: There is some nice Mike Grell artwork and writing here—you just have to sort it out.

The Bad: Those who think that they're going to get something better than the original series are mistaken.

The Ugly: Color by Crayola.

—Chris Ecker

The ADVENTURES of SUPERMAN
By GEORGE LOWTHER

THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN

Publisher:	**Applewood Books**
Issue Reviewed:	**Second printing**
Writer:	**George Lowther**
Artist:	**Joe Shuster**
Cover Price:	**$17.95**
Enhancements:	**Full-color plates.**
Other Notes:	**Novel reprint.**

In A Flash: A reprint of the very first Superman novel from 1942.

Is It Worth It: Not only as a piece of history, but also a pretty good—if dated—read. The first few chapters recount Superman's classic origin, but Lowther manages to add some nice touches of his own, like Krypton's Temple of Wisdom, life in depression-era Smallville, and names for Ma and Pa Kent: Sara and Eben (they weren't named in the comics until 1952). The rest of the story deals with Clark Kent's first assignment for the Daily Planet and Supes taking on haunted shipyards, Nazi fifth-columnists and an entire fleet of U-boats. It reflects a strong pulp influence and a lot of the tension in a country that had just entered the Second World War.

The Good: Joe Shuster's fantastic art, in eight full-page line drawings, two-color plates and several rough sketches. I've never seen his stuff look so good.

The Bad: The bad guys in the story are basically goons with guns, and against super powers it's just no contest. Lowther keeps the story rolling by making Superman ever-so-slightly stupid. You get the feeling Doc Savage or the Shadow could have wrapped up the case in 10 pages.

The Ugly: Superman kills!

—Steve Spaulding

GENE RODDENBERRY'S
LOST UNIVERSE

GENE RODDENBERRY'S LOST UNIVERSE

[illegible]	**Tekno-Comix**
[illegible]	**#3**
[illegible]	**Ron Fortier**
[illegible]	**Aaron McClellan, Frank Percy**
[illegible]	**Bill Sienkiewicz**
[illegible]	**Angel Wong, Stan Woslund**
[illegible]	**$1.95**
[illegible]	**None**
[illegible]	**Front Cover by James Callahan.**

In A [illegible] A recent discovery matches on[illegible] 600 years earlier, so Pa[illegible] Blue and her crew are out to fin[illegible] connection.

Is [illegible] Not especially. Fortier's sto[illegible]capable, but not terribly exciting. [illegible] may mean he's setting elements [illegible] motion that will lead to a big pay[illegible] the line; if that's the case, there [illegible] too many happening at once. [illegible]er goes from an opening se[illegible] with three characters who don't [illegible]ar after page three to an aw[illegible] lengthy flashback (complete with [illegible]qually awkward return to the pres[illegible] to the sudden, accidental death [illegible] pterodactyl-like creature ... the[illegible] more happening than there is tim[illegible]gest any of it—or to find the time [illegible] care about any of it.

The [illegible] The ending, which is as clo[illegible] moment of intrigue as we get.

The [illegible] the art. Whether it's because of [illegible] of this story, it's so cr[illegible] and lifeless that not even Bill Sie[illegible]cz's inks can resuscitate it.

The [illegible] I can't even get worked up eno[illegible] an "ugly." Who cares?

—Steve Darnall

HUTCH OWEN'S
WORKING HARD
by Tom Hart

HUTCH OWEN'S WORKING HARD

Publisher:	**Tom Hart**
Issue Reviewed:	**#1**
Writer:	**Tom Hart**
Artist:	**Tom Hart**
Cover Price:	**$3.95**
Enhancements:	**None**
Other Notes:	**One-shot comic (graphic novel?)**

In A Flash: Dennis T. Womer plans a massive media blitz that will allow his personal power to grow. There's just one person standing in his way: Hutch Owen—dissident, poet and social analyst. Ultimately it comes down to a struggle between media manipulation (i.e., them telling us what is good and cool) and the regular guy who doesn't buy into any of this foolishness

Is it Worth It: Yes, it is. Hutch becomes a very likable character, even though he may be somewhat goofy. In this day and age, where cultural barometers like MTV tell us what's cool and what isn't, it's refreshing to have a character who embraces the concept of thoughtful analysis and mischievous tomfoolery. What makes this comic really work is just how on target it seems. Don't we all really believe that the suits are sitting in their ivory towers conspiring on just how they can squeeze every last penny out of the gullible public?

Hart throws in a little kid as well. Where Hutch may be too extreme in his beliefs, the kid ends up showing young innocence in all its glory. It's an example we should all follow.

The Good: A funny, entertaining comic.

The Bad: Nothing.

The Ugly: Good luck just trying to find this in your local comic store.

—Frank Kurtz

SPAWN

Publisher:	**Image**
Issue Reviewed:	**#23**
Writer/Artist:	**Todd McFarlane**
Inker:	**Greg Capullo**
Color:	**Steve Oliff**
Cover Price:	**$1.95**
Enhancements:	**None**

In A Flash: Wanda goes looking for Spawn and isn't really happy about what she finds.

Is It Worth It: If you're a *Spawn* fan: sure; it has Spawn and his wife (from before he died) face-to-what's-left-of-face. In a lot of ways the series has been building to this, and the moment has a lot invested in it. If you're not a *Spawn* fan, this isn't really the best place to jump on to the series. A lot of people talking to people, people talking to themselves and plenty of captions that just seem to be talking. On the up side, McFarlane's writing skills do seem to be improving—especially in those moments when the writing is in close conjunction with the art, and yes, the big meeting between Spawn and Wanda is just such a moment. Along the way to that moment we get various abominations, assorted perversions, shady dealings and the resident dregs of society.

The Good: Hey, it's Todd McFarlane! Of course the art is sensational, and I swear the colors by Steve Oliff and Olyoptics jump right off the page.

The Bad: "Only one fight scene and nobody gets killed? What is this, a Vertigo book?"—Fanboy.

The Ugly: Spawn puts up a "No Trespassing" sign that tends to squirm and shout a bit.

—Steve Spaulding

GHOST

Publisher:	Dark Horse
Issue Reviewed:	#1
Writer:	Eric Luke
Artist:	Adam Hughes
Inker:	Mark Farmer
Cover Price:	$2.50
Enhancements:	None
Other Notes:	Shipping April 11.

In A Flash: The Ghost tears up Arcadia looking for her sister.

Is It Worth It: The story is a solid introduction to what looks like a great series. The reader meets plenty of new characters, including the Ghost's parents, her sister Margo and plenty of sleazy Arcadia goons. Luke does a good job exploring the character (the whole story is told from her point of view) without destroying the mystery that surrounds her. He also puts more focus on the supernatural nature of the Ghost's powers, and seems to be setting up a major war between opposing mystical forces.

The Good: Warning! If you are at all an admirer of the female form, Hughes' renderings will make you bark like a dog—but if all you're looking for is cheesecake, look somewhere else. This is a dark, moody thriller that proves the strength of Hughes' art is as much in his ability to obscure as it is to reveal. Deep shadows, swirling fabric and a pall of gun smoke hang over every tumble-down cemetery and art-deco high-rise. Incredible stuff.

The Bad: Ghost wants to be a crime story, a superhero story and a supernatural story. It almost feels like too many genres are vying for control.

The Ugly: What the Ghost has to go through to teleport. Ugh.

—*Steve Spaulding*

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Publisher:	Harris Comics
Issue Reviewed:	#1 of 2
Writer:	[illegible]
Artist:	Kirk Van Wormer
Inker:	The Harris Bloodhawks
Color:	Demetrius Bassoukos
Cover Price:	$4.95
Enhancements:	None
Other Notes:	Plot by Jim Valentino.

In A Flash: A savage cult, worshipping all that is chaos, runs rampant in New York City. It is up to the forces of good (ShadowHawk and Vampirella) to stop them.

There are several interesting plot twists that arise along the way. Consider what would happen to a vampire should the intended victim have AIDS. Consider the victim.

Is It Worth It: The story is interesting, and makes for a decent read. My biggest complaint is that the book is a little pricey for what it is.

The Good: The story is really cool. It brings up a lot of good ideas and really makes you think.

I appreciate Jim Valentino's attitude about comic books. While this story has little to no play inside the *ShadowHawk* continuity, Valentino isn't afraid to break today's rules and do the cool story anyway. When all is said and done, everything will still be the same in the main ShadowHawk series. Gorgeous Joe Jusko cover, too!

The Bad: Too many inkers spoil the broth. The colors also look a little muddy, although that could be from the printing.

The Ugly: Johnny was born without a face. Can you help him?

—*Marc Camron*

MANTRA

Publisher:	Mali
Issue Reviewed:	#1
Writer:	Mike W. Bar
Penciler:	Scott Le
Inkers:	Rodney Gatm
Cover Price:	$2.5
Enhancements:	Non
Other Notes:	Continued fro *Godwhee*

In A Flash: Eden Blake and Lukasz, fresh from *Godwheel*, discover a way for Lukasz to get a male body again. After the two are seperated, they, um, "join" again as lovers. The end result—Eden winds up nine months preggers. The child is actually ... ah, that would be telling.

Is It Worth It: I'm a bit torn on this one. The writing is decent and the art is excellent, but it seems to be lacking the uniqueness it once had. The whole man-trapped-in-a-woman's-body scenario was intriguing while it lasted, and this issue puts the kibosh on that. On the other hand, it's a good jumping-on point for new readers. I'm going to keep an eye on what's done with the "woman-with-more-power-than-she-can-handle with the 1500-year-old-guy-who's-just-darned-happy-to-be-a-guy" relationship.

The Good: As previously mentioned, the art is clean and enjoyable.

The Bad: I fear this title may have lost its edge, but I'll wait and see where they go with this new angle.

The Ugly: Nine months pregnant overnight.

—*Rob Holly*

STARMAN

Publisher:	DC
Issue Reviewed:	#7
Writer:	James Robinson
Artist:	Tony Harris
Cover Price:	$1.95
Enhancements:	None
Other Notes:	Shipping March 28.

In A Flash: Jack Knight, in his continuing quest to purchase old collectibles, [illegible] across a circus show where all is not as it seems. While purveying the freak show, Jack runs across the first Starman, who is seemingly held captive.

Is It Worth It: YES!!! This is simply one of the best "superhero" books being put out today. There are no cliched plot lines here; instead, there's a genuine feeling that the story could go anywhere at any given point. The art is [illegible]tic and reaches the majesty [illegible] of DC's fictional cities. The text contrasts the superhero grandeur with [illegible]ht but minute attention to the down-to-earth concerns of the protagonist. The love of old collectibles (quite appropriate for a comic book) permeates the entire series in a very contagious manner.

The Good: Robinson perfectly captures the eerie atmosphere of life in the outskirts. He crafts a general feeling of [illegible]er and unease that lingers constantly in every face other than Jack's. The expressions and descriptions of the [illegible]ning folks is pleasantly reminiscent of Lovecraft's observations.

The Bad: Fans who ask, "Why isn't this a Vertigo book?"

The Ugly: I'm having flashbacks of *Motel Hell* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre!*

—*Scott Grenke*

CEREBUS WORLD TOUR BOOK 1995

Publisher:	Aardvark-Vanaheim
Issue Reviewed:	#1
Writer:	Dave Sim
Artist:	Sim, Gerhard, various
Color:	B & W
Cover Price:	$2.65
Other Notes:	A "benefit" book featuring previously released stories; plus, a new story by Sim and Chester Brown.

In A Flash: A collection of stories from *Swords of Cerebus*, plus a new story by Sim and Chester Brown.

Is It Worth It: As a source of money for Sim's Sprits of Independence Tour, the answer is an unequivocal, "Yes." As a book, the answer is a slightly more qualified, "Yes." If you've never seen the charming "The Morning After" or the hilarious Hal Foster-parody "Silverspoon," they alone are worth the price of admission. If you have (they've been made available a few times before), you might simply want to buy this to be part of a good cause. As for the collaboration between Sim and Chester Brown, well, it's fascinating (but *of course*; it's Dave Sim and Chester Brown!), although even Sim will admit the story makes next to no sense

The Good: Good cause (see above), and as *Cerebus* gets more and more weighty, this book serves as a reminder that Sim has a great sense of humor.

The Bad: That the "Spirits" tour isn't rolling in dough. Give it time.

The Ugly: The baby on the cover.

—*Steve Darnall*

X-MEN 2099

Publisher:	Marvel Comics
Issue Reviewed:	#19
Writer:	John Francis Moore
Artist:	Ron Lim
Inker:	Harry Candelario
Color:	Ken Lopez
Cover Price:	$1.95
Enhancements:	None

In A Flash: HQ blows up, there's a fight in a casino and Billy the Kid gets sprung from the slammer.

Is It Worth It: It's obvious that I was stepping into the middle of several story lines here, but somehow it still made sense without forced explanations. That's a definite credit to John Francis Moore; few writers can keep a story this clear, much less one with the variety of plots in this issue. The book may be named after the X-Men, but the characters I found here had a flavor all their own. With so many team books reading as X-Men clones around, a team with the same name that's so different was impressive. Ron Lim continues to be one of the most underrated artists in the industry; his art is slick and stylized while still completely faithful to the storytelling.

The Good: A refreshingly original and enjoyable comic that did not require a Ph.D in 2099-ology to understand.

The Bad: The references to modern-day Marvel are unnecessary and obtrusive.

The Ugly: I'm concerned that the upcoming "2099 A.D." changes will force this book to lose its individuality.

—*John Benton*

OMNI COMIX

Publisher:	Omni Publications
Issue Reviewed:	#1/March 1995
Writers, both stories:	Caragonne & Thoreton
Artist, "High Guard":	Paris Cullins
Artist, "Mission to Mars":	Andrew Robbinson/ Bob Wiacek
Cover Price:	$2.95
Other Notes:	Brand-new format combining prose writing with comic storytelling. Two versions exist: The direct-sale version in comic stores has the above cover, and the newsstand has a regular *Omni Magazine* cover.

In A Flash: *Omni Magazine* is taking a daring step to try to broaden the comic and sci-fi market. Bound in with a regular issue of *Omni Magazine* (with the comic stories on the outside covering the regular mag for comic stores, and the newsstand versions pack the stories in the middle), they're exposing both markets to each other's style. To further the experience, the stories either start in the regular comic style and finish in prose style with pictures interspersed, or vice-versa. Two different continuing stories start in this issue.

Is It Worth It: I have to say give this a try. The stories are well written and the art is decent. At first, it's really weird. The format throws you off for a bit, because the two writing styles are completely different. In prose, every detail must be explained, while for comics the less said and the more you can say with the art the better. I can't tell you you'll like it, because it depends on your preferences but I can tell you to give it a shot, because you just might like it.

The Good: This could be a really good thing for both genres. I'm glad they had the guts to give it a try.

The Bad: I have my doubts on whether or not comic and/or sci-fi fans are open enough to try this format.

The Ugly: If this fails, no one will be anxious to try anything new.

—*Rob Holly*

DEVIL GIRL
CHOCO-BAR
7

DEVIL GIRL CHOCOLATE BAR

Publisher:	Kitchen Sink Press
Price:	$1.25-2.00
Ingredients:	Pure Milk Chocolate
Other Notes:	One-shot. Get 'em while you can. Wrapper and box art by Robert Crumb.

In A Flash: Comic legend Robert Crumb lends his talents to a [illegible] candybar wrapper, a la the *Melody* and *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* bars.

Is It Worth It: Ask the review staff:
Frank: "Tasted great, most filling."
Steve D: "Thoroughly consumed."
Steve S: "It's devil-icious!"
Chris: "Excessively chocolatey."
Rob: "Um, I can't decide. Can I try another one?"

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RUNE
SILVER SURFER
#1

APRIL 1995

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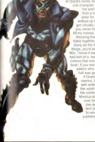
QUICK SKETCHES

OH, MR. GRANT!

Steven Grant's wonderful world of anti-heroes

You can always tell a Steven D. Grant-written comic; you inevitably find one character up against a very large, powerful group, if not the whole darn world. "I've always been a pretty anti-authoritarian character. It comes from growing up in the '60s—particularly as I came from a very radical town"—*Madison, WI*—"it's a pretty quiet town now, but back then we used to go down to the antiwar riots just for fun. That was our entertainment during high school. Some kids went to the movies for fun; we dodged the police and tear gas. [So] I hold a lot of groups in suspicion."

It shows. From the original *Punisher* miniseries in 1987, to *Whisper* [for the late First Comics], *Badlands*, *X* [both for Dark Horse] and DC's *Manhunter* and *Fate* (the latter co-written with Len Kaminski), Grant doesn't seem to think much of superheroes or the world they inhabit. The soon-to-be-completed *Edge* (done in tandem with the great Gil Kane for Malibu's Bravura imprint) is Grant's master thesis on the subject. Kane had wanted to do the 'final word on superheroes,' and he asked Grant to help. "I thought about the whole Image thing," Grant says. "I started to realize how bizarre that whole universe was. The idea of Youngblood, where you got these guys, sort of an adjunct of the government, and they're basically worshiped by the public. In the whole scheme of things, that set off a lot of red lights in me. Here were all these swell guys with powers beyond the mortal scope [who] are also incredibly trustworthy. I sat there thinking, 'That doesn't sound right. It doesn't jibe with my experience.'"



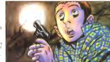
In Grant's world, the true hero is an outlaw, a philosophy best epitomized by X, the one character in the Dark Horse Heroesverse who consistently gets the fanboys hot and bothered. Even so, Grant insists, "He's actually less screwed up than a lot of other characters in that book. He's a completely oddball character for comics these days. I really couldn't believe it when Dark Horse walked up to me and asked if I could write this sort of character for them. He's got virtually no heroic qualities about him at all. X is the guy you really hope you never have lunch with. X is a complete outsider with a messianic complex. All my heroes are outlaws in some way."

Knowing that, it makes sense that his next major project brings Grant and Gil Kane together again on the latter's *His Name Is Savage*, a book considered by many as the first real "outsider" comic. "Let's just say that if you really looked at things, you'd see *His Name Is Savage* is one of the most influential comics of the '60s. I know it was for me personally. It was the first action/adventure comic that had sort of a 'real world' tone. With *His Name Is Savage*, Gil foretold the style of comics that would come 20 years later.... It was the first grim and gritty comic book, if you want to use that term. In fact, I do think it is an inane term created by editors who needed a name to bag comics [where] they didn't know what the hell was going on."

If Grant expresses little patience for the clichés of modern superhero comics, it's far from the only bone he has to pick. "There's also a problem with writers that's universally ignored, not only by the comics business but the world in general," he continues. "It's always been the standard idea in the comics industry that you should be able to jump from *Richie Rich* to *Morbius* at the drop of a hat. This has made for an awful lot of bad comics over time, even from good writers. All you end up with is competent stories and I'm afraid that a lot of my stories in the past have been competent [and] not really good. I'm striving for more *good* stuff. I'm not trying to worry as much about the commercial aspects of it. That's what the publishers and editors are for."

—*Steve Fritz*

DAVID LAPHAM: #1 WITH A BULLET



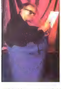
Readers who know David Lapham as the artist behind Defiant's *Warriors of Plasm* trading cards may be taken aback by his new, self-published book, *Stray Bullets*. For one thing, there's not a superhero in sight. For that matter, there aren't even any *heroes* in sight; the first issue involves two hitmen (Frank and Joey) whose job—dumping a body—turns a simple evening out into a white-trash Grand Guignol. The second issue, set in 1977, involves Virginia, a 7-year-old girl (and a classmate of the aforementioned Joey) who's privy to a murderous secret. *Stray Bullets* is a book that owes more to the dark, deadpan style of Kurt Vonnegut or the Coen Brothers (Lapham confesses to being a fan of both) than to any superhero histrionics.

So was Lapham a superhero artist who suddenly grew up, or an ambitious young storyteller who decided to play along? "You break into the industry and you do anything you can get your hands on," he admits, "and I spent the first couple of years just learning and growing. There came a point where I wanted to do more, where you don't want to do other people's things. Eventually I decided I wanted to do things for myself. The long-term plan was that I drew and I liked comics and I wanted to be in comics. Once I got in and started to grow, I discovered so many other possibilities. There was a lot more that I could do, and so I moved to this."

With any work that presents bloody violence in such intimacy, one wonders if Lapham has any real-life experiences from which to draw. He denies it, although it might be worth noting not before laughing nervously. "If you were writing a novel, you would write about what you wanted to write about as opposed to writing a *Star Trek* novel. Thematically, it's more about the people who get caught up in the middle of things, about people who get hurt by situations beyond their control. The mother of three who is going out for bread and never comes home. I guess I just have a lot of pent-up dark things."

—Steve Darnall

RICK PARKER'S TRASH ACT



"Please use the word 'maniac' in your article as often as possible," Rick Parker requests, "because this comic book is for maniacs and it is about maniacs, and it is definitely *by* maniacs. 'Maniac' is going to be a very big word in 1995."

Maniac? Perhaps, but the big words for Parker and Barking Dog Studio are *Kid Death and Fluffy*. That's the one-shot they'll be doing for Event this April. Picture *Dennis the Menace* by Quentin Tarantino and John Woo, as adapted by Parker—the mastermind of Marvel's *Beavis and Butt-head* comic—and you'll have some idea what you're in for. "If you are a sensitive person," Parker warns, "you don't want anything to do with Kid Death or Fluffy."

Assisting Parker are Georges LaVigne and Rob Camacho. "Georges does the pretty girls, I do the ugly stuff and Rob does the dripping stuff. When [Event] hired us to do it, they got all of these other people too. Then, of course, we get to show everything to Lisa Trusiani [Parker's adoring, not easily repulsed, wife]. She's the final sensibility that gets subjected to the material. If it's not gross enough, it doesn't go out—but that hasn't been a problem so far."

So what's the ultimate goal, when all is said and done? "I think we want to have this guy kill as many people as possible in as many different ways as possible. Just blowing people away with large guns isn't enough; you have to come up with more creative ways of meting out punishment. And everybody deserves punishment. I think most people are guilty and deserve to die." Oh.

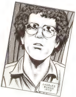
"I will have Kid Death and Fluffy burn people a lot," he continues (he's on a roll now), "burn stuff down and burn people to death, because we can't do that in *Beavis and Butt-head*. I've been itching to do a comic-book character where people are burned, and I think maybe blowtorches and things like that. It won't just be guns. There could be some blowtorches, poisoning, all sorts of bad things. I think each comic book is going to have a disclaimer at the very front, a warning sort of like the Surgeon General's warning, that only an idiot would think that the reader is supposed to go out and imitate the things that Kid Death does. We cannot in any way advocate people actually going out and following this maniacal behavior. It's just entertainment, essentially.

"Isn't that what's really great about comics," he suggests, "that you can kill people and not have to go to jail for it?"

—John Benton

Q&A

CHARLES BURNS



Black Hole *[coming from Kitchen Sink] is pretty creepy stuff. Your previous work, while it had disturbing imagery, always had an underlying humor in it. This seems to be out-and-out horror.*

Yeah, that's true. I guess I'm aware of that. I think I've always kind of consciously laden the stories with humor or . . . injected humor into it. In this story, I'm trying a bunch of different things for me. I'm really kind of delving into the characters more seriously. Instead of having more lighthearted viewpoints, I'm trying to get into these characters in much greater depth than I have in the past with other stories.

It's really removed from the El Borbo comics in Raw, *who's like a walking cartoon. I noticed, even with the first issue of* Black Hole, *the depth of your characters.*

That's what I'm trying to do. I'm not going to say the first issue is disjointed, but there's a lot going on there that might not necessarily make sense at first. It's going to be like a jigsaw puzzle that's going to be pieced together, and all these little bits and pieces are going to fit together nicely. What I'm doing is putting the story together in fairly self-contained chapters. They're not necessarily in chronological order as far as the final story. I'm just jumping around and giving you pieces of the story as it slowly, slowly unfolds.

For example, in the first chapter there are some things with this kid looking at this frog that he's dissecting. He has this kind of experience where he passes out. What you're seeing are all kinds of repetition of imagery that kind of tells you some things that are going to be going on in the future. Things like that aren't necessarily followed up in the course of the first issue.

They make sense down the line.

Right. Even in the third chapter there's this long dream sequence and there's imagery in that that's all going to make sense, too. Even though it's this very weird kind of dream imagery, it's still going to fit together in the final story as well.

It reminded me of a theme you've covered a couple times before in stories about a "Teen Plague."

Well, it's a theme that keeps on cropping up. There was a Big Baby story that was the springboard of an idea. Then there's been a couple of other stories. For some reason, it's an idea that I haven't gotten out of my system yet. *Black Hole* is like a very long kind of epic version, using some themes I've used in the past, but it's really exploring it in a much deeper way.

The concept works on a basic level as a metaphor for what a terrible time being a teenager is.

There's this whole idea [that] you're at a point in your life when you're a teenager, and you don't have a house to hang out in. You don't want to hang out in your parents' house, so you have to find alternative places, the woods or someone's car or hang out at a park or whatever it is. All this stuff ends up in this story. That whole period when you're not really a kid anymore. You're not really an adult either. You're in this kind of limbo, trying to come to terms with those horrific problems.

If there's any time in your life when you're more worried about your skin, it's when you're a teenager...

Everything that's happening to you, you're not *quite* sure what it's all about.

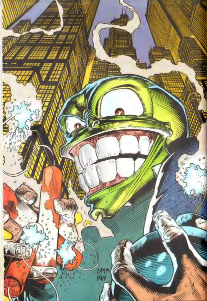
You're refining it to this level of humanity next to horror, and the horror works better as a result.

I've always been concerned about pushing it too far or taking it too seriously. In this case I just had a story that I needed to treat in the way I'm treating it. Maybe it's a more serious, kind of darker tone. I reached a point where I really wanted to get into characterization, to have less one-dimensional characters ... trying to have someone who's not just a stereotype or a kind of one-dimensional facade. It's actually a real person.

It's a limited series, but for how long?

To tell the truth, I don't know myself. I have an outline of a script and I know how long it goes. I know what the characters are. I know where it's going. On the other hand, I don't have every specific issue planned out so I don't know myself. It's basically just going to be a complete story, and when it's done, it's done. I've even noticed since I've been writing that I'll have a character included and I'll realize that an incidental character needs to have more development or seeps in and starts to take on more importance. Things like that are happening. It's going to grow as large as it needs to grow.

—Frank Kurtz



HORSE DRAWN CARNAGE

DARK HORSE TAKES THE MASK OUT OF ONE CARTOON WORLD AND DROPS HIM INTO ANOTHER

BY JOHN MICHLIG

The shoe [illegible] the other foot.

Dark Horse Comics has established themselves as the premier publisher of licensed properties, doing outstanding work with *Star Wars*, *Alien*, *Predator*, *RoboCop* and *Indiana Jones*. Many would argue, in fact, that the Dark Horse touch has actually saved certain franchises from premature deaths—cannot speculate on the potential of another *Predator* or *Alien* film without getting exposure in Dark Horse comics?

While Dark Horse founder Mike Richardson is used to collecting kudos for the company's success with outside licenses, the impending September airing of a CBS animated series based on his own personal pot of gold, the newly made Mask franchise, puts this hands-on manager in the unique position of trading corporate sensibilities outside his Milwaukie, OR, kingdom. A potential cruel shoe, to quote Steve Martin.

"Well, as always, you want to keep the integrity of the character," Richardson says, eliciting not a whit of the anxiety for which this interviewer was probing. "We've got talented people working on the series, so we hope it's gonna come out. We'd like to present something unusual, something a bit different than the standard super-hero fare. At the same time, you want to make it interesting to the kids—who are the largest part of the audience—so there are some compromises that need to be made. I guess the most important thing is to keep the integrity of the character intact."

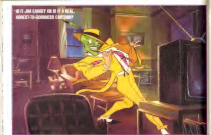
The surprise impact made by last year's *Mask* feature film has created enormous demand for the grinning, green master of mayhem. In licensing world parlance, Dark Horse is sitting on a "Mickey Mouse"; a single character responsible for obscene amounts of revenue. Just how unexpected is the Mask's success? Last June, a month before the *Mask* movie's release, *Index* Magazine (a licensing industry publication) published its list of nine "next Mickeys." Popeye made the list. The Mask did not.

"I think the Mask has broken through into the public's consciousness the way very few comic characters have in the past six months or so," Richardson explains. "Last night, I was at the Trailblazers game, and on the big screen after every basket they had the Mask appear and say, 'Sssssmokin'!' A gymnastic show came to town, and they had the main tumbler in one segment dressed as the Mask. So he's really crossed over.

"A great deal of that crossover has to do with the appeal of the idea—'Boy, what would I do if I got hold of this mask'—and also has a lot to do with the appeal of Jim Carrey, who did such a wonderful job in the role. From the day I took that character to New Line, that was the take: to pull out the Tex Avery aspects. You put on this mask and become an Avery cartoon while everybody else in the world is still 'there.' You're holding that round bomb that explodes, and you're still standing there grinning with a blackened body that's charred and steaming while everyone else around you is in big trouble."

Richardson's concept came into its own thanks largely to the special effects alchemy of Industrial Light and Magic. The sight of the ILM'ed Jim Carrey launching and stretching chunks of his body at will—treating the laws of physics as mere suggestions—was truly breathtaking. Without a doubt, it was the spirit of Avery loose on an unsuspecting mainstream audience—a mainstream audience that's now ripe for further adventures of the lovable loser Stanley Ipkiss and his magic mask. Television inevitably beckoned, and Richardson went to work assembling a team up to the task of creating a cartoon series befitting a character with such close ties to the classic animation of decades past.

"New Line Cinema [producer of the Mask films] has a relationship with Sunbow Productions, and Sunbow has a relationship with Hasbro/Kenner," Richardson says, which also explains the Mask toy rights. "So Sunbow


IS IT JIM CARREY OR IS IT A REAL, HONEST-TO-GOODNESS CARTOON?

Productions was brought in to oversee the production. We were actually more vocal in pushing for Film Roman to do the actual animation. There are some quality animators there, and they seem to really be into producing a great series. We'd met them before to talk about other projects, and when *The Mask* came along we felt comfortable going to Film Roman with it."

Film Roman, whose substantial credits include *The Simpsons, Garfield and Friends, Bobby's World, Mighty Max* and *The Critic*, brings a proven track record to the table. Sunbow, meanwhile, is enjoying praise for its work on *The Tick*. With a team like that, everyone expects big things. "I feel that this series should come out remarkably well," Richardson enthuses. "It *is* going to have its own flavor, as opposed to the *X-Men*-style series. It'll be a zany cartoon. It'll keep those wild elements that were in the movie and are in the comics—wisecracking; the idea of the Mask taking somebody further into their personality than they may be willing to go."

Job one in bringing the Mask character to television was establishing an alternate continuity. As devotees of the comic book are aware, the now-familiar Stanley Ipkiss had very little longevity in the Dark Horse universe, meeting an inglorious demise in *Mayhem* #4 (a mere three issues after being introduced). Compounding the continuity issue is the fact that the Mask cartoon will be accompanied by a monthly comic book title, *a la Batman Adventures*.

Dark Horse Group Editor Michael Eury laughs when asked who would be handling the art and writing chores for the newest Mask title. "Boy, I really wish I could help you there," he chuckles. "Be sure to let me know what you find out when you talk to Mike [Richardson]. Is Stanley alive in the cartoon?"

"For the most part, Stanley will be the hero, but from time to time someone else will get their hands on the Mask," Richardson explains (which should help Eury to no end). "We've added some elements—major villains like Walter, John Arcudi's creation, will appear in the series as an ongoing villain. We'll probably have more superhero elements than you'd normally see—again, a compromise aimed toward the kind of audience we're going for. We're hoping that the character's enough fun to watch that it'll cross the age barrier."

There are still some loose ends to tie up. "Somehow we have to resolve the issue of why Stanley is running around in a television series and why he appears to be dead in the comic series. The character of Stanley was created by John Arcudi, and John would like to keep him dead. I would like not to confuse people—maybe we'll just ignore the issue, maybe we'll try to be it up so the two series can co-exist."

Richardson need not worry: alternate continuities seem to be all the rage in the comic-book community. The success of *Batman: The Animated Series* and its companion comic title has created a precedent subscribed to by the makers of (so far) the *X-Men, Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, Iron Man* and *WildC.A.T.s* cartoons. It's simply become *de rigueur* to release a kinder, gentler, precedent-ignoring comic in conjunction with an animated series. In the case of the Mask, providing a G-rated alternative seems appropriate—the blood-soaked mayhem in an average *Mask* comic would surely knock the Reeboks right off of CBS's [illegible] audience.

"I'm certainly aware of other efforts, but it had nothing to do with our decision [to produce a cartoon-oriented Mask comic]," Richardson explains. "The tone of the animated series is definitely different from that of the comic series; that's why we knew there was room for a second title. After all, this is Dark Horse's most famous character, and we want to increase his appeal. There's another movie in the works, other licensing going on, the cartoon—obviously we hope a wide range of viewers will watch the series, and we want to present the character to a different set of readers and increase the audience base."

Kenner unveiled an expansive and appropriately wacky line of Mask-based action figures and accessories at this year's Toy Fair *[ED. NOTE—for the full story on the Toy Fair, see page 58]*, including "Killin' Time Mask" (featuring pop-out eyes and tongue), "Face Blastin' Mask" (with a face that leaps right out of the skull), convertible "Heads Up Mask" and "Heads Up Dorian," "Quick Draw Mask," "Wild Wolf Mask," "Chompin' Mask," "Chompin' Milo," "Bomb Blast Mask," (with expanding, "exploding" stomach) and "Tornado Mask" (a spinner much like the old "Whizzers"). How did Richardson react to Kenner's vision of his hero? Any nasty surprises?

"No surprises. Kenner is obviously concerned with having exciting toys. They like to see them in the episodes, so the challenge was to give them what they wanted without intruding into the character and its history and personality. I think the head writer, Duane Capizzi, has done a wonderful job of balancing sensibilities."

Working out of his Van Nuys, CA, home as the animated Mask's story editor and co-producer, the 33-year-old Capizzi has his hands full trying to please the many entities involved in the [illegible]. "This amounts to a co-production between Dark Horse, Sunbow Productions, Film Roman, New Line [illegible]on and CBS, so there are a lot [illegible]ls to keep happy," he says. "I breathed a huge sigh of relief when I found out that Mike Richardson had basically given me the Dark Horse 'thumbs up' upon reading my first draft of the pilot episode—I really felt that I was on the right track.

"I think that Mike has been really encouraging," he continues. "Early on in the development of the series we had a lot of brainstorming sessions and came up with a lot of ideas and possibilities; villains and situations the Mask could encounter. I sort of carried those in my head as I developed scripts."

Capizzi is well aware of the affection Richardson carries for the Mask, being his (its?) creator. "The trick, of course, is for me to be inside of Mike's head, because he's been inside of the Mask's head for so long. There are a lot of nuances and subtexts about the Mask that he knows and I don't—and there are occasions where I have to stand corrected. Of course, there are also those situations where I turn around and say, 'Mike, that's great, but I really don't think it's gonna play on screen.' It's been a nice give and take."

Capizzi's challenge is to take a truly sublime concept—a magical mask that allows deeply buried traits and desires of its wearer to involuntarily surface in an obtuse manner—and present it repeatedly in a format that is anything but contemplative. Add to that the fact that the Mask has been defined for the public at large by Jim Carrey—the living antonym for the word "subtlety"—and you've got a heck of a job.

"The concept of the Mask has been redeveloped twice now," Capizzi says. "The movie wasn't the dark, brooding, cynical piece that the comic was; neither is the animated series going to be. Not surprisingly, the animated series will bear a close resemblance to the motion picture. The decision was made to keep Stanley Ipkiss as the hero—albeit a reluctant hero, which speaks to what I think is most interesting about him. Stanley is on the receiving end of a mixed blessing: the mask enables him to be a superman, so to speak, but it's also a Pandora's box of possibilities and mayhem. He has to keep a close watch on this thing. The way I'm playing him in the series in order to get the most comic tension out of the situation is that he's almost rather be rid of the thing, but he comes to realize that he'd about the only person in this crazy world that he can trust to hang on to it. In the wrong hands ... watch out."

While Stanley's reprieve from death's door differentiates the *Mask* movie from the comic book, the animated series also distinguishes itself by ignoring the end premise of the film. "We changed the feature's upbeat ending. One of the first decisions I made was that if we were going to keep what was most interesting about Stanley we'd have to bring him down to the status quo he was at in the movie before he got the girl and his life on track."

So, rather than appearing fresh from a successful Anthony Robbins empowerment seminar, Stanley will revert to his nebbish roots. "If the audience identifies with a character, they'll be elated and disappointed with him at every

"THERE ARE SOME COMPROMISES THAT NEED TO BE MADE... THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO KEEP THE INTEGRITY OF THE CHARACTER INTACT." —MIKE RICHARDSON

MASK JUSTICE

turn," explains Capizzi. "They may *think* they want what's best for him, but I think if we gave them a happy ending—and started from that point —I think they'd quickly realize, 'No, no ... we *need* that comic tension.' So, this poor, noble sap will take it upon himself to be the Mask's keeper, and his life is no more the happier for it. Here's this thing that promises great possibilities—almost a genie in a lamp—but it's sort of a gag-store version of a genie in a lamp. We see a lot of Stanley's foibles, and a lot of our stories will be bittersweet, rather than ending completely upbeat."

Capizzi actually has a genie on his resume, as one of three story editors on Disney's *Aladdin* and the record-breaking *Return of Jafar* home video. His stint on the Disney payroll also included work on *Darkwing Duck* and *Talespin*. Prior credits include *The Real Ghostbusters* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, but claims his proudest pre-Disney work was the animated *Alf*. "I have to say it here; I can't take credit for *Alf Tales*, which was a very funny spin-off series. I did the weird half of *Alf*, the bizzaro half; Alf's 'prequel' adventures on his home planet of Melmac. Very strange, off-the-wall stuff and a lot of fun to work on—'cause I'm sort of a strange, off-the-wall guy.

"I'm lucky in that I had a kind of 'warm up' to this while working on *Aladdin*," Capizzi continues. "Let's face it, there are certain similarities between the Genie and the Mask. I think the main difference is that the Mask can't quite do everything, while with the Genie the sky was the limit. The Mask does work within certain limitations—he's not completely invulnerable. That's been one of the challenges of the series; in doing a three-act episodic structure with cliffhangers, it gets old pretty fast always having the human in jeopardy, of having Stanley's foot stuck in a crack while he's reaching for the Mask... 'Can he get it?' It's kinda tricky, but can inspire us."

Capizzi remembers an instance where the limitations of the premise caused his staff to literally pull a rabbit out of their collective hat. "We did our most creative act-break ever, because we didn't have one. We just pulled in an innocent rabbit from the side of the road to be out act-break 'jeopardy'—kind of a first. We let the Mask break the 'fourth wall'; 'We really don't have an act-break here ... THERE'S an innocent victim.'

"My key is; well, he's invulnerable until you get the mask off—but that's also something we didn't want to abuse. I'm sure we'll end up doing it a few more times in the series than any of us is actually comfortable with, but it just became a real challenge. The plain fact of the matter is that the Mask will be pulled off by various villains—but it's never easy. We're always trying to pose new, inventive ways of getting that darn thing off him."

A great deal of the Mask's appeal is due to his contrast with the environment around him. Keeping that all-important "unreal" aspect of the Mask's persona alive in a cartoon world means, ironically, maintaining a constant semblance of reality as a backdrop to his antics. "There's an attempt to have a cast of 'real people,' some from the comic and some from the movie," explains Richardson. "The look of the animated *Mask* is very consistent with the look of the movie version of the Mask, and the reality of the city behind him will be stretched a little more in the series. There's going to be more opportunity for the fantastic to happen."

For Capizzi, maintaining a realistic background becomes most difficult when inventing bad guys. "We decided to kind of limit the universe because we thought it was important for Stanley and the Mask to inhabit a 'real world,' as he does in the comics. Of course, for the series we felt the need to provide 'heavier hitters' for villains—if you have a superhuman hero, it's gonna get dull fast if you don't have anybody who can stand up to him. The trick was to create 'worthy' villains without giving the impression that this was an 'anything goes' universe. We tread on that territory, but I've tried to do it in very careful, specific ways so as to make it believable.

"And I'm always trying to make sure that Stanley as a central character is reacting to just how *bizarre* the world is around him; the next step is always more unbelievable than the one before it. I keep using Mike Nichols' *The Graduate*, with Dustin Hoffman, as an example. There are all those point-of-view shots from Dustin Hoffman's character of the strange, bizarre people that are always barking in his face. That's Stanley; the normal guy in a really strange world where everybody's out for blood—even his friends—and everyone wants to abuse him. He's sort of an island by himself, just him, his dog and his mask."

Another creative mountain to climb; creating the barrage of wisecracks and quips—visual as well as verbal—that make the Mask so darn funny (and downright inspiring) to young and old alike. Keeping the wit sharp and fresh means staying up to date, but current culture references are a slippery slope—remember Porky Pig's references to "meatless Tuesdays," and the gas-saving admonition, "is this trip really necessary?" in the war-era Looney Tunes shorts?

"We don't get into 'contemporary culture' as much as I'd like," notes Capizzi. "It's something that I really try to walk a fine line on, because it's not like you're doing *Saturday Night Live* and you're on the air the day after you've written the joke. We've argued this stuff 'round and round and round—obviously, there are things in the old Warner Bros. cartoons that don't click with us because we look at them outside of their era."

While he's faced numerous frustrations producing *The Mask* for TV, Capizzi is quick to point out that it's shaping up to be a very positive experience. Still, he wouldn't be a real writer if he didn't have at least one tale of woe to share. (Although my constant badgering, coupled with his sleep deprivation, didn't hurt either.)

"An occasion occurred just recently when I was doing one of my more 'speculative fiction'-based stories," he finally admits. "It was a story that I really felt spoke to the whole concept of the 'id' aspect of the Mask and the whole Jekyll-and-Hyde relationship Stanley had with his alter ego, and I thought it was a fascinating story as a result. I had a little bit of a struggle with CBS getting that one through, just from the viewpoint that they thought it might be too sophisticated for the 'kid-vid' audience that they were shooting for.

The problem with this particular episode was that my 'deep' story was more on the surface than in the subtext, but I put a lot of effort into moving the story along with action that would keep the audience entertained while keeping the key story point constant. It was a struggle ultimately. We came up with some compromises—I don't think the intelligence of the episode was compromised—I think it'll play and I'm very excited about it. Beyond that recent episode, CBS has been very encouraging, and they seem to be laughing out loud at the scripts, which is, I guess, what counts. As long as I keep them laughing, they're happy."

As part of the new *Mask* Marketing Machine, Capizzi finds that he also has to please Kenner, the makers of Mask action figures and accessories. "If I talked to everybody [who wants input], I'd be on the phone all day," he laughs. "I *do* talk to Sunbow Productions—sort of my point-person middlemen—to communicate things back and forth. Kenner has a line of toys and ideas for various '*Mask*-modes' that they'd like to see incorporated into the scripts, and I try to incorporate those to the best of my ability. Of course, my primary concern is to make sure the stories are smart and well told and entertaining. Wherever I can, I try to give them the plugs —where it works."

But Duane, let's be frank—in a marketing environment like the one kids' TV is experiencing today, does Kenner ask for placement of something specific and somewhat incongruous like a nifty Mask Mobile Van?"

"Uh ... they absolutely do, and I have," Capizzi admits. "It's not a mobile van, but it does have four wheels. It's something that I initially [illegible]d, because the Mask is a character that doesn't need transportation—he zips around like Daffy Duck. Then again, the idea of him having a vehicle worked for me because he is a character who likes to do things with a certain panache. When the moment calls for it, I see him giving a whistle and having his car pull up. We use it sparingly when it's necessary for a gag. I keep it in the back of my mind, and we do have an episode coming up that's heavy on car-chase antics where I plan to feature the 'Mask mobile.'"

And does anyone "upstairs" make eleventh-hour requests for insertion or deletion of certain characters?

"Oh, they do. But sometimes the eleventh hour is just too late. I'm sort of an eighth or ninth hour kind of guy, and at a certain point it's gotta fly." Checking himself, he adds, "I don't mean that in a cocky way; actually, it's frustrating because sometimes the demands of the production just dictate that you can't make these things as perfect as you want to. Believe me, I've put as much of my blood, guts and sweat as I can into everything, but at a certain point it's gotta move on to the next stage. You have to pick your battles and decide when it's time to let something go. We're doing our best, and I think we're succeeding in making an *extremely* entertaining show."

It's reassuring to hear that *The Mask* won't be a one-note TV series consisting of pure zaniness. "We've got a pretty good mix," Capizzi promises. "Some of the episodes are a little more comedy based, some will be darker, and I've got two or three of those 'speculative fiction' things where there's a real interesting conceptual idea behind the story that's driving it. The tone of each show usually is dictated by the villain of choice. We've got some straighter guys and some more comedic guys. Hopefully the straighter guys are compelling; I think we got a couple of good ones. The comedic guys I *know* are comedic—we've gotten a really terrific response on a particular duo of villains. I want to hear spin-off somewhere!

"I'm using John Arcudi on one episode. He's been great, and a *wonderful* brain to pick; 'John, here's my idea; does this make you cringe?' I can usually count on him for a pretty honest response. He's been good about letting go, because I think the movie really did most of the 'damage' as far as removing the Mask from his conception of the character, so he's not blaming me for too much."

Capizzi promises some ongoing fun and games, courtesy of one of Arcudi's creations. "Walter will be in the series in several episodes. He will be a presence to be felt—in fact, watch for him very closely, because one of the features, fingers crossed, that we're trying to incorporate into the series is sort of a 'Where's Walter?', which is our plan for a Hitchcock-style 'Walter sighting' on a per-episode basis. So even when he's not the featured villain, keep your eyes peeled—he may turn up somewhere, and you may need to use the freeze-frame button. We thought it would be fun, and 'Where's Walter?' sort of rolls off the tongue.

"It's going as well as it is because everybody's letting me be weird," Capizzi enthuses. "That's important for the *Mask* property."

For Mike Richardson, the keys to relaxing and flourishing in Dark Horse's unaccustomed roles as licensor are trust and collaboration—and choosing licensees who are as in tune with his character as his company has been with those of Lucasfilm, 20th Century FOX and Universal Studios. "There's always the collaborative process—the writers, the animators, the production companies, the toy companies. It's a balancing act to get the right tone for the character. Dave Imhoff at New Line handles all the Mask licenses, and so far all the stuff seems to be lots of fun—sometimes you'll see something and say, 'Wow, I would have done it a different way,' but I suppose that's only natural."

So—to stretch a tired metaphor—while the shoe may be on the other foot, it sounds as though Richardson got himself a custom fit. "We all see the Mask as a character with a long life in front of him," he says confidently. "And we all want to make sure that we don't do anything to endanger that." ▲

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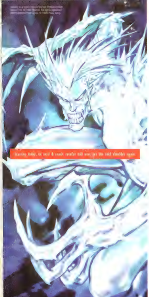
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TOP SECRET

TOY FAIR 95

Once again, Frank and Rob left the relative safety of the cold Midwest for the wilds of New York City. Their mission? To seek out and document all the crazed, colorful and outrageous toys we can expect to see in the year ahead at our local comics or toy store. At Toy Fair, these two would see more gaudy plastic than at a garage sale at Jim and Tammy's place. In the end, though, they would have loads of photos, sore feet and a cold-flu that virtually everyone walking through the twin towers of toys would be sharing with each other. We know, we know ... what about the toys? Just look for yourselves...

WILDC.A.T.S

PLAYMATES

The second wave of Jim Lee's superior WildC.A.T.s action figures will include Void, Voodoo, Pike, Metallic Helspont and Metallic Warblade that are shown here. Coming later will be Majestic, Black Razor, Slag, Hightower and Defile. Among the accessories are the Bullet Bike and Katana Bike. There are also double-figure sets of Helspont/Spartan and Grifter/Daemonite that come with a comic.

EARTHWORM JIM

One of the coolest video games of 1994 has spawned a line of wild and great-looking action figures. Along with a basic Earthworm Jim (yes, you can take the worm body out of the suit) the line will include his video game foes and friends including Princess What's-Her-Name, EWJ in Special Deep-Sea Mission Suit, EWJ with Battle Damage, Clutch, Peter Puppy (Jim's doggy in both of his forms), Professor Monkey-for-a-Head, Hench Rat with Evil the Cat, Bob & #4 and the vicious Psycrow. Accessories include the Psycrow Cycle, Jim Cycle, Jim's Pocket Rocket, Worm Thrower and a full-size version of Jim's Plasma Blastor. Our favorite was the large-size, stuffed Jim with removable Jim body.

TMNT

Playmates is always surprising us with something in the Turtle line. This year they introduced a new concept: Turtles designed by other artists. The four you see on this page were designed by Jim Lee. Time will tell if Playmates pursues this line.

MONSTER FORCE

We don't know how they're doing, but we thought these figures of The Mummy and Shelly Frank were pretty cool-looking.

PLAYMATES

STAR TREK

Hey Star Trek collectors did you really think that Playmates had run out of ideas for their extremely popular ST lines? No Way! Among the new figures coming your way are Picard, LaForge, Ryker and Worf from "All Good Things." There's also a line of Holodeck figures including last year's Data and Crusher in '40s garb and the all-new Sheriff Worf (with Alexander) and Troi as Durango. Other figures include Dr. Katherine Pulaski, the Traveller, Ryker with firing Phaser Rifle (to complement firing or movement figures of LaForge, Worf and the Borg), Metallic versions of Worf in Klingon garb and Locutus and Vash (moved over from DS9). Fans will be happy to hear that Playmates is launching a line of Classic Star Trek movie figures. The original crew in the first movie uniforms include Admiral Kirk Sulu, Spock, McCoy and Uhura. Other figures include the Shape Shifter, General Chang, Commander Kruge, Saavik and Khan (at last!). The diorama shown are from the 3" metal figures that look really great. There are just way too many of them! The talking figures are back with Borg, Ryker, Picard and Q. New DS9 figures you can expect are: Jake Sisko, Vedek Bareil, Tosk, Hunter of Tosk, Grand Nagus Zek, Rom (with Nog), Sisko and O'Brien in dress uniforms, Sisko from "Crossover," Dax from "Blood Oath" and Odo from "Necessary Evil." There are also a ton of ships from all the series and a load of new Inner Space sets. Oh and yes, they will be doing a full line of Star Trek Voyager figures (and the ship, too) More details in future issues! Whew!

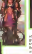
BANDAI

THE TICK

Most of the first line hasn't come out yet, but Bandai is announcing even more cool Tick figures. New figures include Evil Tongue Thrakkorzog, Skippy the Propellenzed Dog, Muckus Tick Twist and Chop American Maid, Hurling Tick and Color Changing Chameleon. There's also a line of talking figures. "I dig Dino Neil" Tick, Natural Tick, "I love wheat" Tick and Tourist Tick. Accessories include the Tick and Arthur's apartment, the Steel Box (the Tick's training apparatus) and a load a Micro City Playsets

TARZAN

TRENDMASTERS

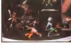


Trendmasters has taken the momentum they have attained from their Godzilla line of figures and kept going in new directions. Their new Tarzan line should make a few ERB fans happy. There are three figures of the ape man with various jungle animals, plus Jane, a couple more gorillas and a lion to tussle with. A new take on the current action figure standby is a computer disk packed along with each figure. The disk is in MS-DOS, but you can send it back in if you need it in Mac format. It's like an interactive trading card that looks really great. Even more exciting for us was their upcoming Tarzan on Mars line. Yep, it's John Carter on Mars come to toy stores! They've also hinted at Carson of Venus! Who woulda thunk it?

JUDGE DREDD

MATTEL

CYBERFORCE



Mattel has taken a different path with their lines of Judge Dredd movie figures and Marc Silvestri's Cyberforce. All the figures will be about two inches high. They will have loads of playsets and equipment to fool around with as well. The Judge Dredd set includes the Angel gang and the always lovable Judge Death. Both lines will also have expensive limited-edition figurines (of the Judge and two Cyberforce characters)

TOY BIZ

X-MEN

Toy Biz has jumped out of the gate with even more and diverse X-Men. This year, they're going to emphasize lines rather than one big monster assortment. As a result, a few lines will have older figures. Among these lines will be X-Men 2099 and Generation X. New figures headed your way are Sunfire, Cameron Hodge Phalanx, Wolverine Fang with Shi'ar Weapon, X-cutioner, Nimrod, Tyler-Apocalypse III, Caliban, Cable Cyborg, Domino, Deadpool II, the Blob, Controller 13, La Lunatica, Brimstone Love, Metalhead, Bloodhawk, Skullfire, Archangel II, Sabretooth Captive III, a killer Foreman II, Battle Ravaged Wolverine, Eric the Red, Havok Spiral, Commando, Urban Assault Cable, Exodus, Avalanche, a new Banshee, Phalanx, Penance Jubilee, Emplate, Chamber and Skin. There will also be a 12-inch Wolverine figure that comes with both civilian clothes and his blue-and-yellow costume. New accessories include X-Men Headquarters, Mini Blackbird Jet, Wolverine Jeep and a 15-inch Electronic Talking Wolverine. Die-cast figure sets include Civilian Wolverine vs. Silver Samurai, Rogue vs. Pyro, Beast vs. [illegible] Morph and Longshot vs. Mojo.

FANTASTIC FOUR

While the X-Men line of figures has dominated Toy Biz's output for the last couple of years, the company has created three more incredible action

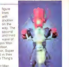


figure lines with another on the way. The second and third wave of Fantastic Four action figures will include Gorgon, Dragon Man, Human Torch, Thanos, Invisible Woman, Firelord, Blastaar, Annihilus (new version), Adam Warlock, Thing II, Namor, Super Skrull, Attuma and Triton. The FF can also ride around in their modular Fantasticar, Mr. Fantastic Sky Shuttle and the Thing's Sky Cycle. They also have a 14-inch Galactus.

SPIDER-MAN

The new Spider-Man figures include Mysterio, Spidey in his black costume, Chameleon, Spidey with Web Glider, Venom II, Prowler, Battle-Ravaged Spidey, Nick Fury, Carnage II, Morbius, Spidey with six arms, Punisher and Spider-Sense Spidey. There's also a 12-inch figure with outfits for Spidey and Peter Parker.

IRON MAN

New Iron Man figures include Iron Man Hologram, Blizzard, Whirlwind, Modok, Iron Man Stealth, Hawkeye, Iron Man Space Armor, U.S. Agent, Iron Man Arctic Armor, Century, Hulk buster Iron Man, Titanium Man, Tony Stark (with armor in a suitcase) and Dreadknight. There will be another Tony Stark figure included with Tony's Transforming Sports Car. There will also be three deluxe dragons featuring Fin Fang Foom, Aureus and Argent.

GHOST RIDER

Hold on there, though. You thought you had every Marvel figure? This year, Toy Biz unleashes their Ghost Rider line. Figures include Zarathos, Blackout, Vengeance, Blaze, Ghost Rider, Skinner and Ghost Rider II (Danny Ketch transforming). Of course, they'll have motorcycles, too. All the Marvel inches will have 10-inch plastic figures and 3-inch metal figures, too.

SPAWN

TODD TOYS

This is the second year for Todd's toy company, and he really has geared up to take on the big boys. We told you about a bunch of new figures (and showed a few). Now it's time to show the rest. Among the new releases for the Spawn line are a new Spawn figure with a removable mask. Yes, he does have a shoelace in his face! This year we'll also see a new costume for Spawn reflected in the action figures as well. Also planned are Ninja Spawn, Cosmic Angela, Xeg-Tor the Anti Spawn, The Curse, Vertebreaker, Future Spawn, Vanadalizer and Violator II (with interchangeable robot parts). Just in case you thought you might miss out on Malebolgia, Todd will also be releasing the figure in a two-pack with Spawn (the one with the board with a nail). These boxes will only be offered to the direct market. Still, if you hope to get Malebolgia by himself, you had best keep your eyes open in your local toy store. There's also the special Spawn Pilot figure along with the Spawn Air Cycle.

Adding to the excitement this year will be two more toy lines featuring more Image creator characters: Wetworks and Youngblood.

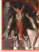
YOUNGBLOOD

From Whilce Portacio's *Wetworks* come Mother, Grail, Dane, Dozer, a Werewolf and a Vampire.

From Rob Liefeld's *Youngblood* come Diehard, Crypt, Shaft, Sentinel, Dutch and Troll that will go along nicely with the previously announced Chapel and Badrock.

Hey! Why isn't there a Viking Spawn?!!

WETWORKS



KENNER

BATMAN FOREVER

Hold on Batfans! Just when you thought Kenner had completely exhausted every potential Batman figure, along comes a new movie. New figures include Deluxe Batman and Robin (shown at the left), and a whole bunch of versions of Batman and the new Robin plus new movie foes Two-Face and the Riddler. We flipped over that incredible Batcave Playset with its elevated platforms and hidden features that is guaranteed to fill up a few living rooms. You'll need that great Gigeresque Batmobile and Batwing. There will be a set of Batman and Robin and a figure called the Ultimate Batman that stands 13 inches tall.

LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT

Among the new Legends of the Batman can be found such figures as Knightsend Batman, Silver Knight Batman (very [illegible]), Samurai Batman, Flightpack Batman, The Riddler and as reported here, the immortal Viking Batman!

KENNER

STAR WARS

We told you about them throughout the better part of last year ... and here they are. We really don't have to tell you who they are, do we? Accessories will include the Millennium Falcon, X-Wing Fighter, TIE Fighter and Sand Speeder (which look like slightly retooled versions of the old ones)

CONGO

You like gorillas, huh? Here's what lies ahead in Congo! Did we mention that the *Official Congo Movie Magazine* is headed your way this summer from Starlog?

Along with a Saturday morning cartoon show comes these great action figures with a ton of the Mask, plus Milo and the evil Donan.

THE MASK

ULTRAFORCE

Last, but definitely not least, comes the Ultraforce action figure line. Unfortunately, this is when our camera quit on us. We still had to show what we got, with shots of Sludge and Prime on the card. These look great and we promise to show more of them in the near future. We'll also clue you in about more great MicroMachines!

GALOOB

That's it for now! See you next month! ▲

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by Christopher Golden

VERTIGO

THRIVING ON CHAOS

While other publishers are using the Reaper's scythe on their titles and employees, DC's Vertigo imprint seems to be on surprisingly stable ground. No wholesale firings or cancellations here, thank you very much. In fact, since Vertigo became an imprint two years ago (beginning with *Swamp Thing* #129), only three of its monthly titles have been canceled. That's a better ratio than you'll find at most publishers these days.

"We seem to be holding our own," agrees Vertigo Executive Editor Karen Berger. "I think that's because we're a stable environment and we produce quality products. When you have so much to choose from in a market flooded with so much product, quality is what I think is going to win out at the end of the day."

Swamp Thing is the grandfather of the imprint; during Alan Moore's legendary run, it was DC's first comic book to carry a "Suggested for Mature Readers" label. From that sprang John Constantine, *Hellblazer*, and roughly a year or so later, Neil Gaiman launched his magnum opus, *Sandman*. Karen Berger didn't always have the flashy title of executive editor, but she has been part of the process, its catalyst even, since the days when Vertigo was barely a twinkle in DC's proverbial eye.

A native of Brooklyn, NY, Berger went to DC right out of college and became an assistant editorial coordinator. Within six months, she became the editor of *House of Mystery*, which featured Cain, a character who would later turn up in Moore's *Swamp Thing* and Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*.

But when did the seed that was Vertigo get planted? An intriguing question. Len Wein had been editing *Swamp Thing* and hired a little-known British writer named Alan Moore to join artists Stephen R. Bissette and John Totleben on the title. Five issues later, Berger took over *Swamp Thing*'s editorial reins. That mix was likely the genesis of what would become Vertigo; in no time *Swamp Thing* had dropped the comics code seal from the cover, and begun printing the words "Sophisticated Suspense" across the top. It was only a matter of time before the "Suggested for Mature Readers" label was introduced (although not without its consequences; the brouhaha that erupted over DC's initial labeling policies was a factor in Moore's decision to leave DC for good).

These days, Berger personally edits *Sandman*, *Sandman Mystery Theater*, the odd

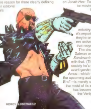
HOWEVER YOU PROMISED ME THAT CHUCK WOULD BE THE LAST BOYFRIEND WE ATE.
BUT THE CUPBOARD IS ALMOST BARE, HONEY...

JAMIE DELANO

[illegible]

miniseries and an upcoming DC mainstream *Man-Bat* miniseries painted by John Bolton, which has been in the works for four years.

By 1992, Berger had established a core readership for her "mature readers" titles, but she also knew that there was a large body of potential readers who were turned off by the very concept of the "comic book." It was decided that creating a separate imprint for books like *Sandman*, *Hellblazer* and *Doom Patrol* would give them a better chance at reaching that untapped audience. It also gave Berger one more reason for more clearly defining their editorial goals.



Did it work? Has the imprint fulfilled Berger's expectations? "Well, creatively it has," she says happily. "I've been very pleased with the projects that we've been publishing. I guess my expectations haven't been filled in terms of the people we would have liked to have reached ... a whole avenue of people who aren't regular comic book readers. I feel like that hasn't really happened."

Ah, but it *is* happening. Joe R. Lansdale was honored with a Bram Stoker Award by the international Horror Writers Association for his work on *Jonah Hex: Two Gun Mojo*. It may be moving more slowly than Berger would like, but Vertigo *is* claiming new readers for the comic-book industry. In this day and age, it's important to note that they're one of the few publishers actively converting (rather that recycling) readers.

The dream tales that Neil Gaiman weaves monthly in *Sandman* have had much to do with that. (The mutual admiration society he's established with avant garde singer/songwriter Tori Amos—which will manifest itself in the upcoming audio version of "World's End"—is merely one example.) Now in the midst of its sixth year, *Sandman* has become the centerpiece of the Vertigo line. It's probably a source of great anxiety for Berger that the story will be finished by the end of the year (see sidebar).

"I've been thinking about it for quite some time," she admits. "I'd be an idiot if I hadn't. Obviously I knew this day was going to come—I knew four years ago that Neil was going to be ending his run—and I have been planning for the future, as the expression goes. Neil is committed to doing a number of limited series featuring the Endless," the first of which is the second *Death* series (illustrated by Chris Bachalo and due out at the end of this year). "He plans to do a *Delirium* series after that and to tackle each of the Endless, though we don't have a firm schedule for the others." What's even more tantalizing is the fact that Gaiman "does plan on eventually doing a *Sandman* graphic novel with Dave McKean."

It won't stop there: While Vertigo won't do anything with the Sandman (or his brothers and sisters in the Endless) without Gaiman, they have found a way to transfer some of that magic into a brand-new monthly title, *The Dreaming*.

"It's an idea I came up with soon after Neil said he wanted to end *Sandman*," Berger recalls. "We're using the realm of *The Dreaming* as the star of a book and using the DC characters that Neil utilized over the years and made stable denizens of The Dreaming: Cain and Abel, Lucien, the three witches and Eve. Neil has said that we would be able to use some of the supporting

characters he has created.

"Neil created a great concept in the Dreaming itself, and what one could do creatively with the realm is virtually endless. Literal dreams, personal dreams, the concept is very rich and Neil was in full support of the idea. He is serving as an active consultant on the series. We hope that we'll continue [to produce] a similar type of atmosphere to what Neil created in *Sandman*, though in no way is this a continuation of *Sandman*."

The Dreaming will have story arcs by different creative teams, with no ongoing stories (similar in many ways to DC's *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*). While Berger is not ready to discuss creative teams, it is known that some of the writers Vertigo has approached are horror/dark fantasy authors outside the comic book field.

Vertigo isn't waiting for *Sandman* to end before moving on: 1995 will be one of the imprint's busiest years, with a whole slew of high-profile projects (see sidebar) including a surprise monthly series that should debut at the end of the year (but we'll get to that in a moment). Last year the monthly *Books of Magic* (by John Ney Rieber and Gary Amaro) and Grant Morrison's creator-owned *Invisibles* debuted to critical and commercial acclaim. This year Vertigo's placed its bets on *Preacher*, a Vertigo creator-owned title from Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon (who made a lasting impression with their three-year run on *Hellblazer*). With a more open, simple art style than most Vertigo projects (including Dillon's previous work), and a story line that will have the heads of fantasy/horror enthusiasts exploding, *Preacher* seems destined to find an audience both within the comic-book community and beyond. In fact, if a Vertigo series ever cried out for translation to film, this is it.

The story: A small town preacher who has put his wild days behind him becomes the receptacle for the power and essence of an insane, immortal, halfbreed angel/demon that has escaped from captivity in heaven. The preacher accidentally incinerates his congregation and then hits the road with an ex-girlfriend turned paid assassin and an alcoholic, Irish vampire. On their trail is the ghost of a cold-blooded killer—called up by angels to track their escaped prisoner—who looks like he just stepped out of Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*.

"The strength of *Preacher* is that it appeals to people who enjoy Quentin Tarantino's work," Berger says excitedly. "There are a lot of atmospheric similarities between his films and *Preacher*. Garth and Tarantino share a common aspect in that they are both great character writers. That's always been the strength of Garth's work. He has a great ear for dialogue, writes very believable characters. I think ultimately, characters really have to be interesting. That's what people are there to read about every month."

Berger is equally excited about Steve Dillon, whom she calls "one of the best storytellers that comics has. This is probably the best Steve Dillon artwork I've seen since *Skreemer* [a pre-Vertigo Vertigo book, written by Peter Milligan]. He's been an underappreciated artist, and *Preacher* is a breakout book for him."

Preacher is loaded with gore and blasphemy, so we can expect plenty of controversy—which is nothing novel for Vertigo. "Content wise, it's definitely not for the faint of heart," Berger

NEIL GAIMAN

Just a few pages from now, you'll hear Neil Gaiman talking at length about his recent creations for BIG Entertainment's Tekno Comix. Let's hear what he's got to get done [illegible] Sandman, which is scheduled to end later this year:

When I am, that's going to be it, yes. It's not finished yet. Issue #69 will be the last part of "The Kindly Ones," and then with issue #70 we start a smaller arc, drawn by Michael Zulli, and he's going to be simply penciling it. Technology has come a long way in the past 50 years, yet we're still doing comics the same way we did them 50 years ago. We decided that it might be time to see what we could do these days with the computer, just these wonderful computers that all the artwork goes into and stuff.

As far as the pencils or—

The bleeding of the pencils, yeah. So that's what we're doing for "The Wake." I'm really pleased because [usually] me, Karen [Berger] and her assistant are the only people who get to see Michael Zulli's pencils. They get inked, and we've had some fine inkers on Michael, including Michael, but you still don't get to see the wonderful pencils that he does. So I'm really looking forward to that, just to see how well it reproduces. We've been trying various processes, and it will look very interesting. There will be a story called "The Wake," which will be about three parts. Then there's one or two other issues, Jon J. Muth is going to be drawing one. I'm toying with one episode of *Sandman* which will be called "Roads Not Taken." *Sandman* [illegible] that never were: a procession of *Sandman* stories that got written and then I decided not to do. There's a fair amount over the years that I've written and thrown away. Much of it was very good, much of it was very interesting, but it didn't fit at that point, or I decided that it would have been too long or whatever. The last one of all will be *Sandman* #75, which is Charles Vess drawing "The Tempest," and it's the story of Shakespeare and the Sandman doing their final deal.

Are you going to be sad to see it go?

Oh, horribly.

—Mike Stokes

agrees, "but Vertigo readers are adults. There are many people who like this kind of material. We don't do politically correct comics. I don't think we do gratuitous comics either, we sort of aim to go for the controversy. We go for the subversion, but not just for the sake of subverting. Our aim is to write about the stuff in our lives that is prevalent but people don't like to talk about too often. You *can* have this kind of content without a message."

The other Vertigo '95 project that has already begun its run is *Jonah Hex: Riders of the Worm and Such*, Joe R. Lansdale and Tim Truman's follow-up to their sleeper *Hex* hit, *Two Gun Mojo*. Stranger than its predecessor, the second *Hex* project is sure to attract as much attention. Other than Jonah, however, there's a dearth of new Vertigo projects that utilize DC characters. (Rumors of a new *Phantom Stranger* series persist, although Berger insists the book is "in development still.")

"With monthly titles," Berger offers, "we like to have a good balance between DC characters given the inimitable Vertigo perspective, and creator-owned books, like *The Invisibles* and *Preacher*. Readers like to see what we do with DC characters, and I think they're great crossover products to make it easier for people graduating [to Vertigo] from superhero stuff."

At the same time, it seems that DC proper is doing its share of intelligent, mature (not mature as in "adult") comics, such as *The Spectre* and *Starman*. One wonders whether there is *any* competition within the company to update those older characters who would lend themselves to more mature story lines. Berger thinks not: "There are books that don't necessarily have to be for readers over 18 years old. It's good to have books like *The Spectre* and *Starman*, that walk the line between [DC and Vertigo]. Nothing in life is easily defined and you have a lot of gray areas. I think it's great that those books are being done where they're being done. [Like *Phantom Stranger*], they serve as transition books, too."

But will there be any other "transition books" on the Vertigo side of the fence in the near future. Vertigo series featuring DC characters?

"*Phantom Stranger* is really the only one in the near future," Berger asserts. "We have other things in development but nothing that would see the light of day in the foreseeable future—though we do have a *Vertigo Visions* coming out some time next year with the son of Prez!" There's also Grant Morrison's *Flex Mentallo* miniseries, "which we're calling a 'Jean-Paul Sartre book for slackers.' People who still pine for Grant's *Doom Patrol* days will have this to read. But in terms of *any* other DC characters, I don't see anything in the next year."

We've seen the delicate balance between DC characters and creator-owned material that makes up the substance of Vertigo. As we *move* toward the end of the millennium, however, Vertigo's editorial mission is far from delicate from a philosophical perspective. According to Berger, that philosophy remains "to continue to produce diverse material for grownups, for progressive comic-book readers and for people who don't normally read comics.

"One thing that I think makes Vertigo, and ultimately DC, distinctive, is that we're a company that produces diverse material," she continues. "DC has two lines, Vertigo and Paradox, that they're putting a lot of energy and commitment behind [in order] to attract new readers to the industry. You really can't say that about a lot of publishers but I think it's a wonderful aspect of DC. I'm not saying that 'cause I work here. If anything, I think the perspective of the company is a love for the medium and that you can publish anything in comic-book form." ▲

PREACHER
IT'S THE THIRD OF THE PREACHER. GOD HELP US.

PETER MILLIGAN

As he completes his fifth year as writer of *Shade, The Changing Man* Peter Milligan has established himself not only as one of Vertigo's top scribes but as a writer who seems quite at home with the notion of questioning reality. For further evidence, see his many other Vertigo projects—*The Face*, *Rogan Gosh*, *The Extremist*—all of which blur the lines between reality and illusion.

On the surface, Milligan's upcoming Vertigo book *Egypt* is no different. It's the story of Vincent Mc. Vincent's "kind of a rogue, and kind of a worthless character, but kind of likeable because he is so f—king worthless, and he gets involved in all manner of Egyptian stuff." What that means is a group of restless college students—anxious to re-create the near-death experiences the Egyptians enjoyed—borrow Vincent for their trial run. When he wakes up, he's surrounded by ancient Egypt, or—as one should always say about a Milligan story—so it seems.

"I wanted a real romp, kind of like a ride," Milligan explains, "where everything you want is there: the Gods, the afterlife, the Barque of the Sun, everything. I wanted a story where I could explain all those aspects: The Book of the Dead, the coffin texts, Ra, Set, the incredible myth of Osiris. Some of that stuff is so beautiful, like the ... idea of the god who is a constant sleepwalker. I wanted a story that would let me have fun and explore all these elements, but at the same time [would let me explore] a [illegible]. It's both an entertainment and a cautionary tale."

Milligan's other Vertigo project *Eaters*, on the other hand, "is a f—king laugh. It's a comedy with a real kick in the teeth at the end. These characters are really likeable characters." Which is lucky for them, as they also happen to be a family of cannibals. "They're the opposite of the Addams Family. The Addams Family purport to be this nasty group, but you'd let them babysit your 2-year-old kid sister. With the family in *Eaters*, it's the complete opposite."

Still, the question persists: What's so funny about eating your fellow man? Good question, Milligan admits. "I wanted to play around with what we find funny and what we suddenly find no longer funny. Just by dint of how we portray a scene can make the difference between it being funny and horrific. The scene itself can be exactly the same. You can have a shot of somebody being murdered and it can be horrific, and another shot of somebody being murdered and it can be f—king hilarious."

—*Steve Darnall*

JOHN NEY RIEBER

John Ney Rieber is the writer of record for titles like *Sh*[illegible] *Tell Me Dark* and *Books of Magic*, but he's [illegible] the Vertigo titles [illegible] the unsettling habit of [illegible] themselves. "It is a [illegible] with Julie [Rottenberg], Vertigo group editor] and the artist and the people at marketing. I may think I know what the story is going to be about and then I sit down and start working on the script and it goes someplace [illegible] different ... you could say that the characters don't like to be bossed around. I may think I know what they should be doing, but when they start talking they have other ideas."

Some of these "other ideas" can be seen in upcoming issues of *Books of Magic*, which chronicles the life of young mage Timothy Hunter. "The story line that we're doing now is about him having to [illegible] sounds trivial, but ... it's important to hang on to the part of yourself that remembers how to play, that knows when things are jokes and things are serious and [illegible] too damn serious anyway." In the story, Tim reconstructs a bridge between the lands of Faerie and the real world, releasing a great deal of magical energy into London, which brings to life the places and people that Tim used to believe in when he was a child.

Rieber's new Vertigo project is the three-issue *Mythos*. It follows a character called Case as he confronts various Thrones, Powers, Entities and assorted [illegible] personages. "I don't know what to tell you about Case outside of what the story tells," says Rieber. "It's safe to say that he's a Southerner."

While the story is set among the alternative rock scene, it will explore parts of the Aztec, Japanese and Old Germanic pantheons, and also blend in a great deal of DC mythology. Meaning what, exactly?

"I can give you a good, [illegible] answer that sounds kind of [illegible]," Rieber admits. "DC mythology is what you make it. For a good example of that you can look at some of the things Neil [Gaiman] has done with characters that have been accumulating dust for a couple of years."

One character that Rieber wants to get his hands on is the Phantom Stranger, to work with the idea (first put forth by Alan Moore) that the Stranger is actually an angel of some sort. "You look at him and go, 'Okay, if I were an angel and I were in that position, why the hell would I wear that [illegible] and that silly hat?'"

—*Steve Spaulding*

STEVEN T. SEAGLE

As one looks down the list of upcoming Vertigo projects, there's a title that might produce a pang of nostalgia: *The House of Secrets*. Don't be fooled into thinking Cain is back, though: Writer Steven T. Seagle promises that this is *not* your father's *House*. "Through some strange turn of events," which Seagle credits to editor Shelly Roeburg, "this wound up being a creator-owned book, with DC licensing us the use of the title. I was, like, 'We can do that?'"

So what's *House of Secrets* about? According to its author, it's about a young, runaway girl named Rain who "flees to the Great Northwest and to get out of her namesake Rain, winds up in a house that is haunted by a five-spirit jury. The jury is made up of spirits who come from different periods of history where justice was in a state of upheaval. One of the spirits is pulled from the civil-rights movement, and one is from ancient Rome." The spirits, he explains, bring in strangers and put them on trial for the secrets they've kept in their lives, "and then sentence you to the attic, the basement or back out into the world. [The spirits] all have reasons why they've been bound to the Earth ... particularly because of the way the justice system was at the time of their own individual trials, that gave them some resonance and made them stay behind."

One of the side benefits of characters of different epochs is the chance to tell stories in the style of the times. "We're trying to do an issue as Greek Tragedy, complete with a chorus in dramatic form."

The other half of this equation is artist Teddy Kristiansen (*Witchcraft*), who's also painting the upcoming *Sandman Midnight Theatre* one-shot (the long-awaited team-up of the Golden Age Sandman and the Gaiman Sandman). "I just got some of the pages to look at," Seagle says. "I was like, 'Oooh. Aaah.'"

Seagle hopes the project will bring some overdue attention to *Sandman Mystery Theatre*, the book he's been co-writing (with series creator Matt Wagner and art by Guy Davis, among others) for the last year. This year, Seagle promises, Golden Age will get double their pleasure when Wesley Dodds teams up with the Golden Age Hourman.

"We've had a lot of letters saying, 'Bring in more Golden Age heroes,'" Seagle explains, "and then we have other letters saying, 'Don't bring in other Golden Age heroes. It will destroy everything that this book is about.' [Hourman's appearance] is not going to corrupt the sensibilities of the book in any way, but people who like Hourman are going to get what they want ... without us back-stepping at all."

Since reappearing on the scene as co-writer of *SMT*, Seagle has found his services more in demand than ever, not just for Vertigo, but for Dark Horse and Image as well. He jokes about the day when he learns to "start saying, 'No!'" but he's well aware of the alternative. "That's true. A year from now I'll probably be going, 'Please let me write the reprint letter column!'"

—*Steve Darnall*

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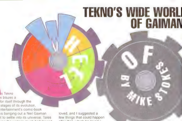


As Tekno Comix blazes a path for itself through the early stages of its evolution, Big Entertainment's comic-book label is banging out a Neil Gaiman planet to settle into its universe. Tales involving the writer's much-ballyhooed cast of Tekno characters gravitate toward one another in the *Wheel of Worlds* one-shot, marking the debut of Gaiman's latest Tekno title character, Lady Justice, while delving into the origins of two of Tekno Comix' top characters, Mr. Hero and Teknophage.

The book is scripted by a group of talents hand-picked by Gaiman, with fellow Vertigo writer John Ney Rieber (*Books of Magic*) given the chore of spinning their efforts into one loosely tied-together story.

"We didn't want it to be like a *House of Mystery* where everybody is really taking turns doing stories, and what you actually have is three short stories and some bridge material," explains Rieber. "We were actually trying to do something that held up as a narrative story, but could still have the different sections of it feel different—have the writers involved work on their own specialties."

That's the philosophy that has fueled all of Gaiman's Tekno books thus far—Gaiman offers concepts and allows the writers to develop them, while serving mainly as a consultant.

"I've let people run with [the books]," Gaiman says. "I had a long chat with Jim Vance the other day, where I basically told him that I'm really enjoying what he's doing on *Mr. Hero*. He seems to be taking it more and more into the direction that I hoped it would go. You know, quirky, odd and very, very charming. It's a terribly nice comic. He sent me his outline for the next two issues, which I loved, and I suggested a few things that could happen after that, which he loved."

As Gaiman was touring to promote his Vertigo book *Mr. Punch* at the outset of the *Wheel* project, his input was limited. "I got as far as saying, 'You know, it would be really nice if everyone was in this kind of weird hoboey jungle, sitting around a fire, telling stories,'" he laughs. "That was really my input."

Built to those sketchy specifications, the showcase book is told in three segments with connective tissue that sees the main characters huddled around a barrel fire exchanging their stories of their pasts for hot dogs.

"They're very loosely tied together," Gaiman admits of his characters. "You can assume they all take place in the same universe, but then again, I've never seen any reason for things to be tied together incredibly tightly.

"For example," he continues, "if you go back in the old days in the DC universe, one assumes—in fact it was quite explicit—that Superman and the Phantom Stranger were in the same universe. But that didn't mean that the tone of the comics was similar, and it didn't mean that they always had to agree.

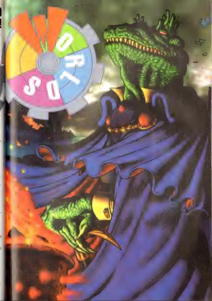
"With *Mr. Hero*, you have a comic that is really a charming, quirky 1990s adventure. With Teknophage, you have this nightmare of alchemical capitalism run wild. I think this is the wildest thing [Rick Veitch has] ever done. Lady Justice is a crime comic, really, with some—I don't know if superheroic is quite the right word—with a rather strange heroine, and I'm really pleased with that."

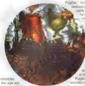
The writing team assembled for *Wheel* includes the transitional material by Rieber, with the *Mr. Hero* segment by Jim Vance, Teknophage's segment by Rick Veitch and Lady Justice's by C.J. Henderson.

"[*Wheel of Worlds*] was conceived as being an alternate world, pretty close to ours, where the Teknophage is pretty involved in the history of the place," says Rieber. Introduced in the second issue of *Mr. Hero*, the actual Wheel of Worlds is an interdimensional portal that allows Teknophage passage between coexisting worlds. The other world setting in the book not only provided an opportunity to maintain continuity in the monthly books written thus far, but it also opened up opportunities for wild stories in a completely different reality.

"The characters step through [the Wheel] and end up in a world that's called Albion ... in a section of London called Redchapel," explains *Mr. Hero's* Vance. "This is a world that is pretty much like Earth, but it's sort of an alternate history version of Earth. If, say, the American South had won the Civil War, what would that have done to everything else in the world?"

Rieber, meanwhile, explains the setting as Great Britain at its most Imperialistic. "At the time the story starts," he says, "it's still true that the sun never sets on the British Empire. That all of the excesses and negative





tendencies of the age are really magnified beyond what they ever were here."

This is extremely upsetting to Mr. Hero's Victorian sensibilities. "Mr Hero is quite appalled by it," says Rieber. "I guess most of the story is actually set in their version of Whitechapel which is called Redchapel, just because no one who lives there could imagine using the word "white" in connection with it. Mr Hero is terribly, terribly appalled at the things that were going on in a place that called itself London. He's a *nice* guy."

A supporting character that is introduced in *Mr. Hero* #3 and revealed even more in *Wheel* is the seemingly immortal Adam Cain. "He's a character whose background is very sketchy at the moment and probably will be for quite some time," Vance suggests. "He goes back a long way as an antagonist to Teknophage. We find .. that Adam Cain was at least partially responsible for activating Mr. Hero in the present day [and] for bringing him and Jenny together."

Cain is also responsible for unearthing Mr. Hero's Ratiocinator head, a second detachable cranium with a personality all its own (also discovered in the third issue). "A second head is found, and when that is put on his body, he gets yet another different personality," Vance explains. "He has a different personality for each head. Basically what Neil calls him in his two different phases is .. the old-fashioned boxer type—the Pugilist—and the other one is the Ratiocinator."

Vance says that each of Mr Hero's personalities will have some link that keeps them aware of what the other has been doing, but Jenny will have to get used to her friend when he's in Ratiocinator mode

"He's not a physical type like the Pugilist," Vance explains. "He deduces things. He's not necessarily universally brillant, but he's incredibly observant. He puts two and two together in a very precise and rapid manner.

"He's snootier and snottier than the Mr. Hero we've met in the first three issues. He's the one who was pampered in the Victorian day. The Pugilist was thought of as somebody who was kind of interesting to watch get up and move around and box people, but he really wasn't very interesting to talk to, so the Ratiocinator head was kept on him most of the time, and celebrities would come backstage and meet him, and he was treated well, and he sat around and read a lot.

"He was actually allowed to stay active most of the time, whereas the Puglist head was kept in a hat box in the dressing room, except when it was time for him to go on," Vance continues. "He didn't speak to anybody except for the stage hands. So [the Ratiocinator] is the spoiled child of the two."

Using his powers of observation as a gimmick to guess audience members' occupations, the Ratiocinator was actually the other half of the magic show alluded to in the first issue of the series

"In fact, if you look back at that [issue], there's a brief point where [Jenny's] reading the old newspaper review and it mentions the Ratiocinator," says Vance. "She's puzzling over it saying, 'The ratio-what?'"

"They'll have to develop their own relationship as it goes along, and she doesn't really care for him."

Vance focuses his attentions on the personalities and relationships in the book rather than allowing himself to get too bogged down with the scientific possibilities of a newmatic man, detachable personalities or even interdimensional portals like the Wheel of Worlds.

"I'm lucky that the science in *Mr. Hero* isn't at all like real science," Vance admits. "It's based on a sort of fanciful, steam-powered alchemy idea, so I could know virtually nothing about physics and still get away with it, as long as I know that the guy's got to burn something like coal, and have some water occasionally to keep running."

LEFT: TEKNOPHAGE'S STEAM-DRIVEN CASTLE. BELOW: THE GENTLEMANLY MR. HERO.

An aspect of Mr. Hero's adventures that ties into *Wheel of Worlds* and will be more closely revealed over the next year is his relationship to Teknophage.

"We're talking about doing a crossover at some point down the line, like maybe after the first year of Mr. Hero," Vance reveals. "Actually got him and Teknophage together, because they don't really meet. They have a brief meeting in *Wheel of Worlds*, but Mr. Hero doesn't realize the importance of it. He doesn't know how the Teknophage figures in his own history.

"He'll have a better idea after about a year's worth of continuity is out of the way."

"This is the first time that Mr. Hero has met the creature who is, theoretically, responsible for creating him," Rieber says. "There's more play with people's reactions to each other."

A *Mr. Hero* supporting cast member who knows a great deal about Teknophage, however, is Adam Cain, who has an agenda of his own.

"Adam Cain and the Teknophage have known each other and been involved with each other for thousands and thousands of years, maybe more," Rieber explains.

"The Teknophage, of course, has a lot of resources at his command," Vance adds. "He's got a planet full of degenerates working for him and agents on the other worlds that he's interested in also. Adam Cain pretty much works alone and tries to manipulate things from behind the scenes to try and thwart the Teknophage's plans."

"Since [Cain's] lived forever, he's had a long time to put this plan together," he continues. "It's like a game of chess between him and the Teknophage."

Though Teknophage and Mr. Hero have a rich history, even in the nascent Teknoverse, the third principal player in *Wheel* has no connection to either of them.

"Lady Justice [is] not a part of Adam Cain's plan. She's something that happens on her own," he says. "Cain is flexible. I think if he has a chance to include her in his plans against the Teknophage in the future, he will do so but she's introduced in the Wheel of Worlds–we'll see him meet her at the same time that the audience does."

Whereas Mr. Hero is essentially a lighthearted character, his foil is one of the darkest characters in comics. "With Teknophage, I came up with the idea of this, the last of the dinosaurs," Gaiman says, "The one predator that had survived everything. The predator who had essentially killed off the dinosaurs by predating them.

I was delighted when Rick Veitch took the concept and ran with it–just turned it into a very strange comic about the nature of capitalism.

It's 'so black it's ultraviolet,' Rieber says, quoting Harlan Ellison. "He has ultraviolet humor going on there. It's pretty dark stuff."

I think the scripts he's turning in are the best things he's ever done," Gaiman continues. "It's as if he's taken everything that he learned while writing *Swamp Thing*, writing all the *Brat Pack* stuff, but there's also a level of humanity that his stuff tended to lack in the past."

Working with Gaiman for the first time on *Wheel of Worlds* is writer C J Henderson, who has been given the task of coming up with the debut story for Lady Justice, one of the more abstract ideas to emerge from the mind of Gaiman in which the recurring character is actually a blindfold

The joy for me of coming up with Lady Justice," says Gaiman, "was coming up with an idea, essentially, for a noir comic. It's a crime comic in the same way that many issues of *Daredevil* and *Batman* were great crime comics, but it's an everywoman comic. It's not about one of these stunning comic-book women with breasts like B-52s. One issue she could look like Winona Ryder, the next issue she could look like Shelley Winters.

"[Lady Justice] is the story of a blindfold and how the blindfold gets knocked off; it's about the very abstract, sort of strange nature of justice."

As you can imagine, capturing such an abstract notion presented a great challenge to writer Henderson. "I was given a concept sheet … that was dedicated to all the characters," Henderson explains. "I took the Lady Justice part and said, 'Okay, how [can I] make sense out of this?'

"I've talked with Neil since then," he continues. "It's his concept. I would have never come up with something like this on my own. I have to say that freely, this would never have occurred to me. This is why they're paying Neil Gaiman, because this is a totally different, new concept, and I'm really happy to have been handed it. In other words, I feel like a quarterback that can certainly run with the ball, but it took the coach to come up with the play."

Henderson, who will also be scripting the first story arc of the *Lady Justice* series, explains his interpretation of Gaiman's concept, in which the recurring character is an object rather than a living being. "Since the beginning of time, there has been a force that has sought to set things right. Obviously because of the intrinsic difference between men and women, it settles in women. I was given the task of explaining why it would be female. Boy, I had a ball doing it, too. But it's a different woman every time. Once the case is solved, the wrong set right, then it moves on.

"[It's] a pretty American idea, you know," he adds. "You only serve jury duty once every so often."

"[In *Wheel of Worlds*], you find out what the whole deal is with Justice and the blindfold, why that happens," says Rieber. "There's definitely the foundation being laid for later things, and, of course, the inescapable hints of mysterious things that happened in the past that you'll actually find out more about later."

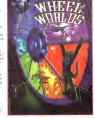
While Teknophage and Mr. Hero have been linked from the beginning of the *Mr. Hero* comic book, Lady Justice's introduction in *Wheel of Worlds* will show that Gaiman's influence on Tekno Comix expands beyond that one story line.

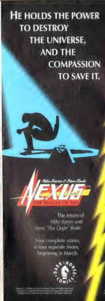
"We all felt it would be a good idea to let people know that the Teknoverse was not about Mr. Hero battling the Teknophage, period," says Rieber. "One of the things that we were trying to do was broaden the scope of the universe—let people know that it's a very big place where all sorts of things can happen. The different characters and the different stories have very different flavors. *Lady Justice*, I believe, is going to be a grittier, more film noir-type feeling book. Jim's *Mr. Hero* stuff is clever and good-hearted adventure stories with really engaging characters. Rick's stuff is, oh, quite a bit grimmer."

Quite content with big company life and the financial spoils that go along with it, the Gaimanverse should continue to grow with their star's new creations well after *Wheel of Worlds*. "Neil created a whole stack of characters no one's seen yet," Vance promises. "They're bringing them in one at a time."

"[Tekno Comix] wanted things that they could own and go off and do, and it was just a matter of saying, 'Yes, here you go, I will create some characters,'" Gaiman adds. "I had no problems with doing that at all. There are always more characters floating around in my head than I could ever actually use. Being told [to] do what ever I like for a new company that's essentially science-fiction based was a nice challenge.

"It would have been very easy to say, 'Okay, what would my take on the X-Men be?' or 'Let's do the old Dr. Strange,' or whatever. I really didn't want to do that. There are too many comics out there that are clones, and I think it's silly. Clone comics are very sad, they display a horrible lack of imagination. What I tried to do in each case, knowing that I wasn't going to be writing these things, was to come up with ideas for comics nobody had done before." ▲

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9 HACK & SLASH

10 BINOMES
11 NIBBLES
12 NULLS
13 SPIKEY
14 SCUZZY
15 CAPTAIN CAPACITOR
16 MR. CHRISTOPHER
17 PRINCESS BULA
18 MOUSE
19 PEARSON
20 MR. MITCHELL

21 GRAPPLE HOOK
22 KEY
23 X-RAY
24 MEND
25 SAFETY LINK
26 [illegible]
27 [illegible]
28 MOTOR
29 JACK HAMMER
30 FLASHLIGHT
31 SCISSORS
32 SPYGLASS
33 POWER HAMMER
34 SCREW DRIVER
35 COMMUNICATOR

36 BELLY OF THE BEAST
37 CRIMSON BINOME
38 ENZO THE SMART
39 GREAT BRAIN ROBBERS
40 IDENTITY CRISIS
41 MEDUSA BUG
42 [illegible] & THE FED
43 RACING THE CLOCK
44 [illegible]
45 THE TEARING
46 [illegible]

47 EVIL ENZO
48 MEGABYTE'S GRASP
49 DEVIL AND HIS DOT
50 NO RIDERS
51 BOOGEY MAN
52 DOUBLE TROUBLE
53 TERRIBLE TWOSOME
54 EVIL EYES
55 MEGAPRED

56 HACK & SLASH
57 NIBBLES
58 TANK CAPTAIN
59 SCUZZY
60 MEGABYTE
61 AGENT SIX
62 HEXADECIMAL
63 NULLS

64 RUN BOB RUN
65 SEE DOT RUN
66 AMMO KEY
67 HAT TRICK
68 OLYMPIANS
69 COACH ENZO
70 NICE SHOTS
71 CAPTAIN ENZO
72 DOTS THROW
73 BOB PAN
74 TOMATO BOMB
75 STUCK FORMAT
76 PIXIE GAL
77 FEE-FIE-FORMAT
78 LEGGY BOB
79 SAGGED
80 CLOWNING AROUND
81 STRUNG OUT
82 PIE SQUARED
83 MAKE UP MESS
84 I COULDA' HAD AN F9
85 HOSER
86 SHIFT KEY
87 BEARY SCARY
88 KILLER CLOWN
89 DRAGON CHASE
90 SIR LANCEBOT
91 DAMSEL IN DISTRESS
92 DIGITAL DOGFIGHT
93 FORMULA 1
94 RIOT CONTROL
95 DEAD EYE
96 DOT PATROL
97 ESCAPED
98 BUTTER KNIFE
99 BOB'S BOB
100 [illegible]
101 DOT TO DOT
102 DOT MERLIN
103 YUCK
104 BROTHERLY LOVE
105 [illegible]
106 JOKE ARROW
107 WILLIAM TELL
108 LIP SYNCH
109 CLUE GIVER
110 [illegible]
111 GOING BANANAS
112 SCREEN SAVER
113 BOOB TUBE
114 ADVENTURE PARTY

115 BOB WANTS YOU
116 ROCKET MAN
117 SOFTWARE PIRATES
118 ROCK STAR
119 IN THE BRIG
120 BAD HAIR DAY
121 [illegible]
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127 [illegible]
128 [illegible]
129 OVERLOAD
130 TRAPPED
131 FLY BOY
132 BUDDIES
133 MOUSE PAD
134 PRO PILOT
135 BRAIN SCAN
136 TISSUE PLEASE
137 ARMED AND READY
138 ESCAPE KEY
139 ENZO REBOOTS
140 BRAND X
141 MRS. ENZO
142 BOOT TO BE WILD
143 ON THE RUN
144 VIRAL ERASER
145 ATTRACTIVE
146 HANG TEN
147 QUEEN OF CHAOS
148 [illegible]
149 CHECKLIST A
150 CHECKLIST B

H1 DOT AND ENZO
H2 ENZO AND MEGABYTE
H3 MEGABYTE AND HEXADECIMAL
H4 HEXADECIMAL AND BOB
H5 BOB AND DOT

C1 STARPILOT
C2 INDY RACER
C3 BEANSTALKER
C4 CLOWN
C5 THIEF
C6 WIZARD
C7 SPACE COP
C8 KNIGHT
C9 MARATHONER
C10 BOMBARDIER

SA1 DOT
SA2 BOB
SA3 ENZO
SA4 MEGABYTE
SA5 HACK & SLASH
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SA7 FRISKET
SA8 PHONG
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SA10 CECIL & MIKE

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REINTRODUCING COMICO COMICS

ANOTHER CHANCE TO GET IT RIGHT

BY JOE FIELDER

Let's admit it. We're jaded. In recent years, we've seen new comics line after new comics line, new universes after new universe. We've *also* seen more than a few of them expire, along with the companies that produced them. But what about a second chance? What if Defiant, Blackball and all the rest that've fallen to the wayside in current times had another chance to get it right?

Such is the case with Comico. This summer, they're returning to comics. And they appear to have *learned* from all the mistakes everyone has made in the market—including their own.

Old Comico, New Comico

To put it all in a nutshell, the old Comico (which produced such comics as *Jonny Quest, Mage, Maze Agency* and *Elementals* during the 1980s) met with financial problems and ultimately bankruptcy. New ownership came in and spent a considerable span of time problem-solving—some problems left by the previous owners, some of their own device. The new Comico struggled to get the company back on its feet *while* publishing comics. In April of '93, they suspended publication. Why?

Comico Editor in Chief Brian Azzarello explains: "The break was at the time we were doing reasonably well, [but the publisher] and I saw the glut coming. On one hand, I'm sorry we were right because a lot of people really got screwed. On the other hand, it gave us the ability to hold on to a lot of stuff, sit back, see where the mistakes were being made and give us the time to correct [them]. We were probably on the way to making [them] ourselves. Now that the dust seems to be [settling], I think this is a good time for us to come out. So when everybody's retrenching, that's the time to attack.

"By taking two years off from publishing, we were certainly allotted the necessary time to figure out what makes comics good, and ... I guess the downside of what the market had become, where so many of the books that are out there are just interchangeable at the moment."

Comico may have halted *publication*, but they continued to produce comics and now have over roughly 30 issues completed and ready to go. Comico also spent that time talking to fans and retailers, developing what they believe is a solid marketing plan to support those books.

Hell On Earth—And Heaven, Too!

Comico has chosen to launch with a new miniseries, instead of leading with clearly their most recognizable property, *The Elementals*. What kind of marketing plan is that?

"Rather than start off with what we we're known for," Azzarello explains, "we wanted to create a fresh jumping-on point for people with *Oblivion*."

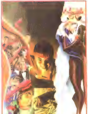
May sees this jumping-on point, the six-issue *Oblivion* miniseries, from writer Jack (*Elementals*) Herman and artist Andy (*Dark Horse Comics, Slash*) Dimitt. Cover artists include Arthur Adams, Buzz, Alan Davis, Geof Darrow, Tony Daniel and Dave Gibbons.

Plotting and intrigue abound as the warring camps of heaven and hell sit down for a summit. Since this happens to take place in the town of Nirvana, Texas, a few choice humans find themselves caught in between—including the superhuman, Wildebeest. *Oblivion* is *set* in the Elementals Universe, and though events in the miniseries stem directly from the resolution of the "Oblivion War" (which will be resolved in early issues of *The Elementals* monthly series), Comico feels the series should stand alone for new readers as well. Surprisingly, it does.

The Elementals Universe is well known to Jack Herman, a game designer and writer at Origin Systems (the folks who put out the popular *Ultima* and *Wing Commander* computer games). Herman has actually been involved with Bill Willingham's creations even before they saw print. "I'm the co-designer of a role-playing superhero game called *Villains & Vigilantes*," Herman says. "Bill Willingham did a number of adventures for us [wherein he created] sort of rough-draft versions of [Elementals' villains] The Destroyers and Saker."

Eventually, Herman became the regular scripter for the *Elementals* series, where he wrote a large share of both volumes of the book. He describes the *Oblivion* miniseries as, "very much a classic sort of horror story. To me, the two elements that make a good horror story are: There has to have a lot of paranoia to it (and *Oblivion* certainly does) and to use the device Stephen King discovered, which was to 'Take something from everyday life that we're all intimately familiar with, put a twist on it and make it something that's kind of terrifying.' Well, religion plays a big part in a lot of people's lives ... so, *what if God was out to get you?!?* I think that's the wellspring from which the whole rest of the story flows. [It's] about a guy who God is out to get."

Wildebeest, the superhuman caught literally between heaven and hell, is easily Herman's favorite character to write from the series. In fact, he gave artist Andy Dimitt a reference for Wildebeest based on Nicholas Cage's character in *Raising Arizona*, one of his



ABOVE: ALEX ROSS' COVER FOR *ELEMENTALS: GHOST OF A CHANCE*. BELOW: *STRIKE FORCE AMERICA* ART BY SCOTT CLARK.

all-time favorite films.

"I enjoy [Wildebeest] because he's basically an invulnerable character. He's not the brightest of people, but he's really likeable. People hang around with him. He can get them all excited and going in a certain direction, and inevitably when that leads to trouble, he's fine and it's just all these people around him who are always the ones getting hurt. And gosh, he just feels terrible about it. It never quite sinks in that, gee, it's *his* fault."

Government Lackeys

"Hope lying in the proles" wasn't the only thing to come out of 1984. Bill Willingham's Elementals debuted as a back-up feature inTexas Comics' *Justice Machine* Annual #1—four ordinary people who lost their lives and returned from the grave with powers given to them by elemental spirits.

Years later, the number of superpowered characters in the Elementals Universe exploded, leading to the government forming their own team, Strike Force America. This June, Comico gives the team their own ongoing series. Dave DeVries, who's worked on Marvel's *Phantom* series, will be writing the title and Scott Clark (*StormWatch* and *Warblade: Endangered Species*) is the penciler.

"Major Chaos is the leader of Strike Force," Azzarello comments. "He is a military man who's leading a group of people who have no respect for authority—including his own. So that differs from a lot of other team books because it's a team book without a sense of teamwork. There's a certain amount of interplay that is just based on tension. It's kind of a lot like having a job."

When Titans Marry

While you won't see the return of the *Elementals* monthly series this June, the characters will return for the wedding of Vortex and Haunting in the *Elementals: Ghost of a Chance* graphic novel. This special occasion is brought to fans by creator Bill Willingham and *Star Wars/ Cenotaph* artist Tony Akins, with a painted cover by *Marvels* artist Alex Ross.

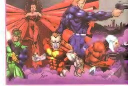
Akins comments, "I think the old fans of the *Elementals* will get a real kick out of it. I tried to stay faithful to what Bill Willingham did with his characters, which is drawing them fairly naturally, not pumped up. They're good-looking folks in costumes. So I tried to stay faithful to that and I tried to spin things as dynamically as possible. I hope the research that was done on the book, both by myself and Willingham, makes it exotic because it happens in exotic places ... like a ritzy North Shore hotel in Istanbul. Plus [there's] some good action. The old fans will dig it and the new fans will pick it up. It'll be a nice story to yank their interest, along with the Tony Daniel stuff coming out."

Wrapping Up An Old War

That "Tony Daniel stuff" is, in fact, the long-awaited return of *The Elementals*. The series returns this July, continuing work Jack Herman and Daniel created during Comico's break (effectively issue #27 of the old series). Azzarello insists that reading issue #1 shouldn't be like jumping on in the middle of something. "Nobody's going to get that sort of impression. There'll be an intro, probably extensive. More than likely it'll be more than a 32-page comic, though we're not going to up the price on it."

Fans might more easily connect Tony Daniel, the artist for the series, with Marvel's *X-Force*. Comico was the company that gave Daniel his first big break in comics. Friends at a Chicago comic shop showed Daniel's work to Comico in 1992, and the artist soon found himself being asked what title he'd be interested in working on. "And I said of course I wanted to do *Elementals*," Daniel said. "I ended up getting that job and working for them for a little bit over a year. I did maybe 10 issues of *Elementals*."

Daniel wants to make sure everyone knows it's his early work. "I'm not ashamed of it," he says, "but it was a big learning experience for me. You can see the improvements issue by issue, you can see when I learned something. So people that want to see where I came from and how I started out, they'll get to see my early work [at the same time as] my newest work."



This series will wrap up the long-running "Oblivion War" story line, that originally started several years back when Marvel and DC began the annual summer crossover trend. "Bill [Willingham] wanted to do that with The Elementals Universe," Herman says. "He wanted to do basically a 24-issue story line [with a] mega-war that had a long impact on the universe. Unfortunately, about halfway through the actual plot line, the old Comico of course went under."

Herman explains the basis for The Oblivion War. "Basically, hell as we know it rearranged itself into a planet called Oblivion, moved into our solar system and began this actual war with Earth to get back all the power [the sorcerer] Saker had taken away from it. Powers had been running around unchanneled on Earth forming all sorts of weird paranormal creatures and giving people paranormal powers. It expanded the whole Elementals Universe, which was really only a handful of characters, to something to like 50 or 70 different characters by the time Bill got it set up."

Meanwhile, the replacement for the original Monolith will find a none-too-welcome reception from the Elementals team. "The Elementals have been around sort of protecting the Earth from all these various supernatural phenomenon for so long that they've become a bit jaded. It's been hinted a lot that when they're not actually out 'combating all the forces of evil' they tend to kind of just hang around the house and mope. Suddenly they're confronting [the new Monolith] Donald Ridgeway who takes this 'We're the good guys and we're supposed to protect people' attitude. And they're like, 'Get a clue, pal.' So we've got this new character on the team ... Are these other Elementals welcoming him to the team with open arms? No. Is there any kind of mentor/student relationship being set up here? No. It's just kind of 'Look. You pick it up as you go along and if not, you'll just get killed and we'll get another new one.'"

For future issues of *The Elementals* the writer intends to keep the characters far from the planet of Oblivion. "I want to keep them separate. I think if they ever cross paths again that should be important enough to be a major thing. It's just not going to happen on a day-to-day basis."

John Woo Meets Akira

One of the more 'esoteric' Elementals characters will appear totally revamped this August, courtesy of Brian Azzarello and Tony Akins. Red Dragon will find himself cast into a more modern mold—in fact, one the writer describes as kind of "Quentin Tarantino meets Superman and Hunter S. Thompson." Appropriately enough, the first issue will sport a cover by the Gonzo-like Simon Bisley.

"It's certainly got a Gonzo sensibility to it for a superhero book," Azzarello says. "The thing's pretty nuts. [And] both of us have a real strong affection for a lot of the Hong Kong movies [like] John Woo, that type of stuff. We're working a lot of that ... beautifully choreographed violence into this book. That's also something that I think a lot of comic fans share with us. But it's never really been addressed, I don't think, effectively in comics, outside of manga—which is something that unfortunately a lot of buyers of traditional mainstream comics don't see. They cringe when they hear 'manga,' but they'll eat up the videos. It's never really seemed to translate well in panel-to-panel storytelling, other than *Akira* ... up until now with *Red Dragon*."

Who?!?

"He's certainly been a background character," Akins admits. "On one of the first covers I drew for Comico I remember having to find his image to put him in the art, and thought, 'This was kind of a cool character. I don't know what he does.'

"I found out he does virtually nothing," he laughs. "The Elemental bible is fairly large, but [a lot of the] characters either got killed off or were just window dressing. Brian was asking in the course of the last two years, 'If you had a character, which one would it be that you would try to revamp?' Bloody Mary was one. I got to redesign her for the *Elementals* graphic novel. Before, it looked like she shopped at T.J. Maxx. That was her costume. So I got to do some work with her. Devil Dog was another one I would have liked to revamp, but Red Dragon kept crossing my mind."

So just who is this newly defined character?

"In the Elementals Universe," Azzarello says, "he would be the equivalent of Superman, powerwise. But he's not America's Superman, he belongs to the Red Chinese. So he's controlled by a communist government, and he's essentially a super soldier. The way we're approaching it now is, he's a man who has an immense amount of pride and his pride is what's blinding him to the fact that he's pretty much just an overstuffed puppet. And the government just sort of placates him to keep him in line, and happy."

Very Good, Children—But What Does It Mean?

As editor in chief, Azzarello receives the task of summing up the overall focus of Comico's return. "What we've been really attempting to do—and I think we've pulled it off—is create some books that are exciting to read, and when people are done reading them, they'll smile and they'll look forward to reading the next issue. *I hope*."

HERO COVER ART

Listen Up Puny Humans!

So, you ever get the urge to just smash something? Do you sometimes get cut off in traffic or have a bad day at the office and want to go on a rampage? Do pesky investigative reporters make you narrow your eyes, steel your voice and say, "Don't make me angry ... you wouldn't like me when I'm angry..." Well then, we have the cover art prize for you! Yes,

INCREDIBLE HULK #2

can be yours, thanks to your pals at *HERO*. (Oh boy! Toad Men!) Just send your cover art creations to:

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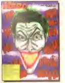
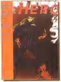
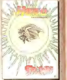
One prize, one winner and the legal guys say we own all submissions. And no swipes! Swipes and traces make us angry. You wouldn't like us when we're angry...



Cheap laughs indeed, courtesy of Blair Shedd, Fairlee, VT.

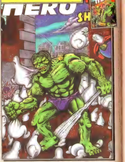


Ben Bishop of Brownsville, IN, sums up the comic press in a nutshell.



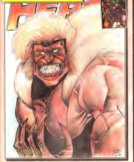
According to our *HERO* coordinator, Brian Dencklau doesn't live anywhere. Sorry.

GRAND PRIZE!

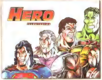


Aiden Whitty The battle royale that shocked St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada! Appropriately, Aiden wins *Incredible Hulk #181*.

1ST PRIZE!



Roderick Johnson from Kansas City, MO, recalls how his last trip to the orthodontist changed his life! Roderick wins a signed Toy Fair *WildC.A.T.s*.



Strong guys on parade, courtesy of the artist formerly known as Hassan, one of Des Plaines, IL's finest.

POSTCARD PARANOIA

It's all so simple! The postcards. They're using the postcards! That's how They pass messages, disseminate subliminal propaganda, create new converts! Soon we will all be helpless before Them! It's the postcards! The postcards!!!!!

Chisum Pierce of Taylor, TX, sent us the postcard of a whole new breed of cowboy. "Yup, thanks to genetic mutation I can cover muh spread in eight or nine hops." Have fun out on the range, Chisum.

Mark Navarro sent us this one from Manila in the Philippines. According to the Philippine Department of Tourism, it's a Tarsier, the world's smallest monkey, found only in Bohl. Thanks, Mark. Learn something new every day around here...

Tim O'Kane of Jupiter, FL, found this charming image by Olivier Christinat, *Grosse tête* (Big Head) from his "Grotesque Icons" collection. Ironically enough, it looks like your average *HERO* staffer come deadline day.

You got postcards? We need postcards! Send 'em in and win the undying gratitude of the Secret Masters of the World—uh, sorry, I meant to say the *HERO* editors. Silly me, what was I thinking?

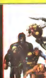
HERO ILLUSTRATED and Malibu Comics proudly present the Create a

HERO

Contest Winners!

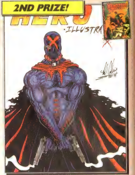
Way back when we asked our loyal readers to come up with a superhero or two of their own and send their ideas in. The response was staggering, but we finally managed to narrow the field. Three hundred second-place winners received Gold edition Ultraverse comics and an issue of *HERO*, while the top 10 were sent on to Malibu. Of those top 10, one grand-prize and nine first-prize winners were selected—but you'll only count eight first-prize winners here. One condition of the contest is that Malibu acquires the rights to the submission, and some enterprising soul decided to develop their character themselves! Let's hear it for creators' rights. And now let's hear it for our top ten entries:

GRAND PRIZE!

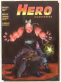


Kudos to Jeffrey Henderson of Las Vegas, NV, for his superteam "The Persuaders." Jeffrey is now a bona fide comic-book creator, with all the rights, privileges and hassles pertaining thereunto. Look for the Persuaders to make an appearance in an upcoming Ultraverse comic.

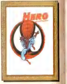
2ND PRIZE!



Noeland Collins of Lapeer, MI, brings new meaning to the phrase "Weapon X.," and wins a signed *Xenozoic Tales* #13 for his efforts.

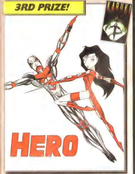


No, no, Bats, *behind you! BEHIND YOU!* From Jason Geyer of Lubbock, TX.

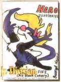


From Jeremy Strickland, Newport, KY. Is Spidey leaping toward or away from you?

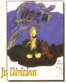
3RD PRIZE!



Jonathan Hong from Burbank, CA, offers a minimalist version of Daredevil and Elektra, and wins *Kabuki* #1, signed by David Mack.



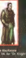
Is it? It *is!* It's Fifi Canary! From Darryl Heine, Inverness, IL.



When you need arteries clogged, it's Fry Guy and Ketchup to the rescue! From Rochelle Rakes, Aurora, CO.

1ST PRIZE!

All the first place winners pictured below had their hero designed and illustrated by a team of Ultraverse artists and received the original artwork.



Rebecca MacKenzie Norfolk, VA. for "Dr. Knight."

Joshua Siegel of Niskayuna, NY, for "Punchline."

Thomas Cason of West Alis, WI. for "Indigo."

Trajan Gutierrez, Silver City, NM, for "Bird of Prey."

CONTINUED...

Ernie Cooper of Potsdam, NY, for "Give."

Rick Jackson of Smyrna, GA, for "Ideal."

Frank Gerbens of Washington D.C., for "Tempest."

Ray Nelson of El Cerrito, CA, for "Whispering Jack."

GO FIGURE!

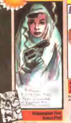
...will return next month! But you may or may not have noticed this Cerebus figure from Bruno Aprea and Enrico Salvini of Italy in last month's **HERO.** They garnered $1000 selling the little guys, and donated the proceeds to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, which is always the coolest thing to do with any loose cash you may have lying around.

HERO ENVELOPE ART

1920 Highland Avenue
Suite 222
Lombard, IL. 60148

Hey, budding artists! If you've got any confidence in your ability to put pen, pencil, crayon or marker to paper, you oughta let us know—you just might win some pretty neat stuff! However ... if we detect a swipe or trace job, the envelope will be discarded and you will be the source of great ridicule from our editors. Don't forget to include your age!

1st Place WINNER



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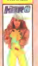
Rick Blackwell
Plainville, MA

2nd Place WINNER



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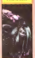
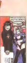
Ben Rodriguez
Joplin, MO

3rd Place WINNER



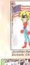
HERO Premiere Edition #0

Derrick Plater
Ulysses, KS

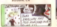


Drew Boynton
Concordia, MO

Glenn DeLeon
Brandon, FL

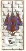


Jonathan Hong
Burbank, CA



Michael Boock
Tacoma, WA

Martin Dukovich
Auckland, NEW ZEALAND



Derrik Macnair
Clearfield, UT

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HHI08

MARK A. NELSON'S FROM PENCILS TO INKS

EEE-GAD! Will this paint stuff ever end?!

Chapter 20: Oily Is As Oily Does

OIL PAINTS:

Oils are exactly what you might think. The binder that holds the pigment is linseed oil. So when you work with oils you need to prepare, or size, the surface. If you don't, the oil in the paint will attack the fibers of the material you work on, or it will not dry properly and this will cause all sorts of problems.

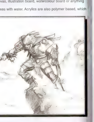
The preparation of the surface can be done in several ways. Traditionally rabbit skin glue was used. This takes a lot of time, a double boiler, soaking the glue, watching temperatures and patience. If you would like to try this old method, which I've done on canvas, get a copy of Ralph Mayer's *The Artists Handbook of Materials and Techniques*. He goes through many old formulas and methods of working with a variety of mediums. If for nothing else it's always interesting to see how many different ways you can work with one medium.

The contemporary method is using a substance called Gesso. It's very simple to use. Open the jar or tube and paint the surface with the Gesso. You can apply the Gesso with a brush, sponge brush or a new, clean sponge. This allows the artist to paint on different surfaces: paper, wood, masonit, fabric, canvas, illustration board, watercolour board or anything that you can get Gesso to stay on when it's dry.

A simple rule of thumb is: lean to fat. Gesso is a ploymer which mixes with water. Acrylics are also polymer based, which means that when they dry they are no longer water soluable. They become a thin, plastic-like material. This becomes your lean. Oil paints are rich and buttery because of the linseed oil; this is your fat. You can do your sizing or grounding of your painting surface with Gesso, underpainting in acrylics, then finish with your oil paints. What you can't do is mix oils and acrylics, or paint acrylics over oils. Water and oil do not mix, and oils dry very slowly compared to acrylics.

Gesso has not only allowed the artist to paint on different materials, it has also given rise to being able to create different surfaces on which to paint. You can have a very smooth surface or a very textured surface. I currently work on either hot press watercolour paper or watercolour board. The board is very easy to work with because the paper is already on a rigid backing. So I Gesso the paper side with two coats and when that's dry I Gesso the back. This will stop your boards from warping. For a smooth surface I use the sponge brush, or if you want to try something different, apply the Gesso with a brush and let the brush strokes show. This will give you a very textured surface on which to paint. Part of learning is to experiment and see what happens.

Now that the surface is prepared it's back to the business of drawing. The first thing I do is a pencil sketch of my idea for the painting (Fig. 1).

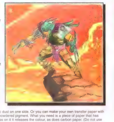

1

Once that is complete, using a photocopy machine I reduce and make several photocopies of the shrunken pencil sketch. Then using watercolours I do a colour rough (Fig. 2). This helps you get the overall feel of your painting before you start. You can make a lot of colour choices and experiment quickly on this small scale.

Now, on to the painting. Turpentine is the thinner for oil paint. There are several different thinners available that work as well. Some are odorless, some are biodegradable. Look around your local art supply store and ask questions. There is quite a range and choice of products.

Using turpentine and Raw Sienna, I mixed up a very thin solution of paint which I brushed onto my Gessoed board. Next, with a clean rag I rubbed the surface until it had a thin, even coat of colour, this is called a stain or tone. It will take awhile for oils to dry; a thin stain like this can take up to a day to dry. You want this tone to completely dry before you transfer your drawing or start painting. To speed up the drying process, you can do a couple of things; you can add several drops of cobalt dryer or japan dryer to your paint solution, or add a small amount of Liquin to your mixture before you apply it to the board.

Once the tone is dry you now can transfer your drawing to the board. Transferring can be done by several means. You can buy transfer paper, which has a graphic dust on one side. Or you can make your own transfer paper with tracing paper and a conte crayon, a coloured pencil or powdered pigment. What you need is a piece of paper that has some sort of pigment on one side so that when you press on it it releases the colour, as does carbon paper. (Do not use carbon paper. It will dissolve when the paint is brushed over it and muddy up all your colours.) Now I make a full-size photocopy of my pencils, position this on the toned board, place my transfer paper pigment-side down and with a 2H pencil trace over the lines. This will then transfer a line image onto the board.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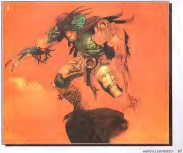
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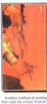


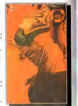
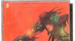


Figure 1: Now I start the underpainting and development of the form. Here, using Burnt Umber, I went lightly over the line image. Then I started to rough in some of the basic lights and darks.

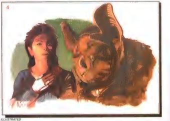
Figure 2: Here I've roughed in some of the colours. With oils you can work from your darks up to your lights, start with medium tones and go up to your lights and down to your darks or build how it works best for you. I usually try to paint my darks very thinly and paint thicker for my lights. The attitude here is that you want to draw the eye to the areas with more surface and detail. Thusly, the rock's dark area I would paint thinly and the surface that is light I'd use more opaque paint and apply it heavier.

Figure 3: The yellow skin tone was first developed as a thinly painted orange over the brown underpainted line. Some of that line was left to show through, becoming the dark. Once that was dry, the next layers of light were applied, allowed to dry, then the lights and highlights were worked up with the brightest area applied last.



Another method of working is to do your whole painting in a value study first, then add the colour. A lot of the old masters worked in a Burnt Umber or Sienna underpainting to work up their image in terms of lights and darks or value. Once this was done, the colour was added to flesh out the forms. If you look at their paintings, you can still see the brown under the painting showing through some of the colours. A deep brown can very easily become a dark as the oil paint is thinly scummbuled over it.

Figure 4) Here I drew directly onto the Gessoed board, then started to develop the form in a Burnt Umber. Once this underpainting was dry, I came in and built up the colour on the face. The half of the face which is still brown is the underpainting. The shadow under the chin and along the neck is the undershadow showing through the flesh tones. Oil paint can be applied thinly, as in the sweater which is a blue wash, or it can be worked up, as in the face. There I blended the colours by working one colour into the next. The buttery richness and slow drying time of the oils allows you t to blend colours very softly. Here again, the highlights were added last. The sweater is still in progress, as is the bat face.



Positives:
1) Drying time slow, allows for a soft blending of colours.
2) The paint is workable for a day or more, if no dryer is added.
3) The property of oils allows the colours to adhere to each other.
4) Rich colours, the linseed oil adds a richness to colour.
5) Glazing and finishing varnishes enhance colours.
Glazing in oils is handled a little different than watercolour, but the idea is the same. Thin the colour and apply it in layers to make the colour you want. The simple formula for this medium is: one part turpentine, one part Sun-thickened linseed oil or Stand oil and one part Damar varnish.
6) Probably the most versatile of the paint mediums.

Negatives:
1) Drying time. If you're not patient it can become quite a mess as you try to work all the areas of your painting at once
2) If you work your colours too much they become rather muddy very quickly.
3) Red and blue do not always equal purple.
4) Time, again. Oils don't dry quickly, so if you have a rush job, oils may not be the easiest of mediums to work with to meet a deadline tomorrow
5) The solvents are harsh, strong odors to mediums, and you have to get rid of the solvent/paint waste correctly. It can't just be rinsed down the sink; it must be disposed of properly.
6) You have to ground the surface you paint on.

Positives:
1) Drying time fast, some colours can be worked over in less than a few minutes.
2) The paint can be worked very opaquely or thinly. You can add enough water to the paint that it can be used like watercolour.
3) Same range of colours as oils.
4) Come in tube colour which is thicker and jar colour which is thinner.
5) Work great through air brush.
6) They have a retarding gel which slows down the drying time. This makes the paint a little more workable.
7) They also have mediums to change the paint's transparency (matte and glossy medium), and finishing varnishes to paint on the final product that will give the finished painting more of an oil look.
8) You can, once the paint is dry, work over it with oils, coloured pencils, cray-pas and a range of mediums.
9) Clean up with soap and water, no harsh solvents.

Negatives:
1) Acrylic is a plastic. Once it dries it's no longer soluble in water. Alcohol will dissolve dried acrylic.
2) When you build up the paint it tends to develop a glossy look. The layers of plastic sit on top of each other and do not meld as oils do
3) It's hard to get black to cover in one coat and some of the other colours are not very opaque.

Postives:
1) Beautiful, transparent to translucent medium.
Allows you to build colours through thin layers
2) Working wet into wet can give you a look that cannot be duplicated anywhere else.
3) Drying time varies. It depends on how much water you use.
4) Highlights can be put in with gouache.
5) Colours come in a dried cake form or tube, which allows greater portability.
6) Clean up with soap and water.

Negatives:
1) Even when the colour has dried, it is still water soluble. If you spill some water on your art it will run.
2) Some colours will lift off if you paint over them with another colour.
3) You have to be very conscious of your lights. Once you put a colour down it covers the paper, and the paper is your light.
4) Colours can get real muddy from overworking them.

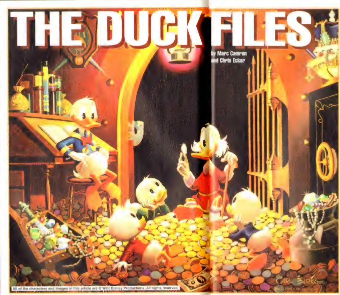
This is one medium that I've used very little. It is caesin-based paint. The nice quality of gouache is that it dries without any sheen. The colours soak one into another like oils. They can be used wet or straight from the tube, giving you a range of looks from transparent to opaque. Their drying time is quick, but like watercolour, they remain water soluble. I've also used them to paint highlights on watercolour paintings. They dry flat and cover in one coat.

SUMMARY

There are many types of paints. Each has its own unique characteristics. You, as the artist, need to find the paint that works best with your thought process. Some of the paints are more flexible in applications, some have a look that is truly their own and some will allow you to work over them with other materials. It's up to you to try each medium and find your happy ground. You may like some, or you may like them all. ▲

THE DUCK FILES

y Marc Camren
and Chris Ecker



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A World of Believers

To call myself a fan of Carl Barks would be an understatement. I prefer to think of myself as a believer.

I'm not alone. There are millions of us who have believed in Carl's worlds of wonder for years. For us, Duckburg exists not just in comics, but on maps. To us, Carl is not just a gifted artist and writer, but our hero.

In 1993, I was proud to welcome Carl himself—and the largest exhibition of his paintings ever—to Diamond's 10th Annual Retailers Seminar in Atlanta. That was also the year I asked Carl to help me design a new trophy for our annual Gem Awards ceremony. Carl's design would be crafted by Randy Bowen into The Carl Barks Lifetime Achievement Award, "The Barkster."

And, unbeknownst to Carl, he would be the award's first recipient.

I'll never forget the thunderous applause that greeted the announcement of Carl's name at the awards ceremony, nor the way his entire face sparkled when he accepted that trophy. He looked just like the people who'd seen his art on display at the Seminar, and who'd visited Duckburg in his classic comics tales: totally surprised and thoroughly delighted.

I think about that moment often, and fondly. Although I knew it would never be enough, I wanted that event to be my way of thanking Carl for casting his wonderful storytelling spell upon us all for decades.

Let it be said again and again: Thanks, Carl.

Steve Geppi
President and CEO
Diamond Comic Distributors

THE DUCK FAMILY

Donald Duck: Donald Fauntleroy Duck was created in 1934 as a supporting character in the cartoon *The Wise Little Hen*. Unlike the other characters in this cartoon, Donald stood out as a real personality, and soon was starring with the Disney Studios' leading mouse. Over the next few years, Donald continued to increase in popularity until he was Disney's biggest star, even bigger than Mickey himself. Donald is well known for his temper and his speech impediment. Even though Donald is very difficult to understand—especially when he is angry (which is most of the time)—he remains one of the biggest stars ever to come out of Hollywood.

Uncle Scrooge: Scrooge McDuck is the richest duck in the world. No duck has more or holds onto it quite so tightly. Along with many great investments, Scrooge keeps much of his capital on hand at all times in his famous money bin. The money bin holds roughly three cubic acres of money, consisting mainly of gold coins and rare gems. Scrooge likes to dive in his money like a porpoise, burrow through it like a gopher and throw it in the air and let it hit him on the head. First appearance: "Christmas on Bear Mountain" from *Four Color Comics* #178.

Huey, Dewey and Louie: Three minds thinking as one, Donald's nephews premiered in cartoons and made the leap to comics at almost the same time as their famous uncle. Huey, Dewey and Louie are very smart and manage to keep Donald out of trouble ... at least sometimes. They are all members (in good standing) of the Junior Woodchucks, and are entitled to all of the benefits and honors associated with this esteemed organization.

Daisy Duck: Daisy Duck is Donald's faithful girlfriend. Daisy acts as Donald's conscience and also tries to keep Donald out of trouble. Daisy's first appearance (as Daisy) was the cartoon *Mr. Duck Steps Out*.

A Brief History of Ducks in the Universe

When someone talks about the most popular comic book in the world, those of us living in the United States might immediately think of *Superman* or *Batman*. After all, these books have been with us for more than 50 years and inspired a genre that currently dominates the American market. Besides, how could you not love guys in long underwear fighting for truth, justice and the American way?

Well, you might have varying answers to that question, but the point is the above guess is wrong. There's no denying that superheroes have retained their popularity over the years but where worldwide popularity is concerned, the Man of Steel and The Dark Knight can't hold a candle to Walt Disney comics. Over the last 60 years, the Disney Empire has produced newspaper strips, comic books, Big-Little books and hundreds of assorted storybooks. Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy have been entertaining people in print for almost as long as they have on the silver screen. In fact, even after Disney stopped producing cartoon shorts in the late 1950s, the comic books kept on coming, with exciting new stories for fans to sink their teeth into.

Of all the Disney-oriented comic books, one group of characters emerged to shine above the rest. Led by Donald Duck, the "Duck Family" has been the perennial favorite since its introduction in the early 1940s. The first comic artist to take Donald under his wing was Al Taliaferro. An inker from the *Mickey Mouse* comic strip, Taliaferro had been with Donald Duck since the character's creation (He appeared in a supporting role in the 1934 Silly Symphony "The Wise Little Hen.") Taliaferro did the newspaper adaptation of that landmark cartoon and proved himself worthy to carry Donald through his first starring appearance (also a Silly Symphony) and, starting in 1938, his very own strip.

The very first Donald Duck comic book was *Four Color Comics* (First series) #4, printed in 1940. This comic featured story and art by Taliaferro, who did the book in the same style as the strip.

While Taliaferro's stories were good, they did nothing to advance the characters beyond the constrained world created in the Disney cartoons. The comics were based around small events and only utilized the limited cast of characters that were created by the Disney Studios staff.

At this time, there was a young artist working at the Disney Studios on the Donald Duck cartoons. His name was Carl Barks, and he was a storyboard artist and writer for some of the most popular Donald cartoons of the late 1930s and early 1940s.

In 1942, Western Publishing approached Barks about working on a comic book for them. The result was *Four Color* #9, "Donald Duck finds Pirate's Gold." The story was an adventure that pitted Donald and his nephews against Peg Leg Pete in a search for treasure. Barks originally intended the story as a cartoon starring Mickey, Donald and Goofy (the original storyboards can be seen in the *Complete Barks' Library Vol. 1* #1); when the project was passed over, he decided that comics would serve as an equally good home.

How right he was: The book proved to be immensely popular, and Barks continued to produce full-length adventure stories for *Four Color*. Barks also became a regular for the *Walt Disney Comics and Stories* series, penning mostly 10-page humorous stories to go with the book's anthology format. Later, the *Four Color* one-shots were turned into two separate comic series, *Donald Duck* and *Uncle Scrooge*. Barks wrote and drew stories for both series.

Over the next few years, Barks created and developed a strong cast of supporting characters to join Donald on his adventures. The most significant of these creations is Scrooge McDuck, Donald's miserly old Uncle whose taste for adventure was boundless—so long as it put more money in the old money bin.

To go with the wonderful characters he created, Barks also created a world for them to live in. The town of Duckburg is the center of this world, but there are dozens of places (some real and some not) for the Ducks to go adventuring. They could go underground to meet with the Terries and the Firmies (those pesky critters who are known to cause earthquakes) or to far-off lands where square chickens lay square eggs (ouch!).

For over 20 years, Carl Barks created stories for *Donald Duck*, *Uncle Scrooge*, *Walt Disney Comics and Stories* and numerous one-shots and specials, defining the characters that we know today and forming the future of not only Disney comics but also Disney cartoons.

After Barks retired from writing and drawing comics, he continued to work with the Ducks, painting hundreds of wonderful oils featuring the Duck family (see sidebar).

In the late 1960s, the fever for Disney comics had cooled down in the U.S., but it continued in full force overseas. Since there was no longer a steady stream of comic stories coming from the States, various European publishing companies licensed the rights to produce their own Disney stories. Between the Barks reprints, some original non-Barks U.S. stories, and the stories written in Europe, the Disney Ducks continued to reign supreme overseas.

Then, in the mid-1980s, a new Duck artist appeared. When Gladstone comics tried to revitalize the market for Ducks in the U.S., they not only wanted to reprint classic Barks stories, but also create some new and exciting original ones. One of the most beneficial discoveries they made as a result was a cartoonist named Don Rosa. A modest artist who pays homage to Carl Barks and does not particularly like his own work (see interview), Rosa came on board with the desire to create new Duck stories. Although the Gladstone project was a moderate success, Rosa connected with the European publishing company responsible for printing Disney comics on a grand scale. They accepted him as an employee of theirs (the Rosa stories appearing in the U.S. are actually reprints of European stories printed several months earlier) and Rosa continues to produce Duck adventures. Today Rosa is hailed as a master for his work, and, aside from Barks himself, the most popular Duck artist ever.

The Disney Ducks have remained a comic-book mainstay for many reasons. The characters are charming. The range of possible stories reaches from epic adventures to simple trips to town. They never age. They never die. And they are not affected by the world around them, which at times seems more cartoon-like than even Gyro Gearloose.

The Disney Duck stories endure because they are fun to read and the art is often beautiful, something few comics can claim. There is a simplicity to the stories that make them

Gladstone Gander: Gladstone is Donald Duck's cousin. Although Gladstone doesn't work, he is never short on money or the nicer things in life, by virtue of being the Luckiest Duck in the world. He wins every contest he enters, and never has to worry about where his next meal is coming from because they always seem to find him. Although Gladstone doesn't always come out on top, he never stays on the bottom for very long. Gladstone first appeared in *Walt Disney Comics and Stories* #88.

Gyro Gearloose: Gyro is a gentleman inventor. A soul whose only goal in life is to make things easier for everyone. Although all of Gyro's inventions may not work quite right, they are always interesting and fun to look at. Gyro is the guy all of the ducks turn to when they need a problem solved; he first appeared in *Walt Disney Comics and Stories* #140.

The Beagle Boys: The Beagle Boys are the most despicable group of villains ever imagined. This family has been in prison for so long they don't even have names, they just go by their prison numbers on their chests. All of the Beagle Boys are after the same thing—the contents of Scrooge McDuck's money bin. Fortunately for Scrooge, they aren't too smart and don't stand much of a chance. The Beagle Boys made their debut in *Walt Disney Comics and Stories* #134.

Magica DiSpell: While her goal is not nearly as ambitious as the Beagle Boys, the object of Magica DiSpell's obsession is almost as unobtainable. She is after Scrooge's lucky, number-one dime, the first dime that Scrooge ever earned, and—as far as Magica thinks—the source of Scrooge's luck.

Flintheart Glomgold: The second richest Duck in the World, Flintheart would like to see Scrooge dethroned and sent into the depths of poverty. A huge windbag, Flintheart must challenge Scrooge at everything he does. He has been the instigator of many contests and always ends up the loser.

acceptable and appropriate for all ages. Most of all, the Disney Ducks endure because people love the characters. Parents introduce their children to Disney characters early in life, and when the comics are available, buy them and share them with the next generation. And as each generation gets introduced to these timeless creations, they too will laugh and thrill to the prospect of finding the golden fleece with Scrooge and his nephews.

The adventures of the Duck Family and Duckburg has emerged past the world of comic books and into the realm of cartoons. The *Duck Tales* cartoon was a major factor in revitalizing Disney television animation. If not for the success of *Duck Tales*, other Disney animated shows may never have come to fruition.

Duck Tales borrows many of the story lines from the classic Barks stories, and there are rumors that Don Rosa's origin of the Uncle Scrooge anthology may appear in the future, as a multi-part episode or a direct-to-video movie.

Those interested in reading the classic Duck Family adventures will be happy to learn it won't cost an arm and a leg. Gladstone has released a series of comic albums that reprint the best of the classic Barks stories in full color.

Gladstone and Disney Comics are also still releasing new Disney comics every month, featuring the work of Don Rosa and some of Europe's top Duck writers and artists.

There's a reason that these books sell millions of copies a month. There is a reason that Disney comics are printed and released every week in Europe. It's because Disney comics possess a quality that shouldn't be taken lightly, especially today.

They're fun. ▲

Ducks as Art

Over [illegible] comics, Carl Barks [illegible] career.

Barks [illegible] plished [illegible] and [illegible] Barks [illegible] self, [illegible] acrylics [illegible]

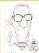
Barks [illegible] some [illegible] scenes [illegible] thinking back [illegible] that he [illegible] with, [illegible] well.

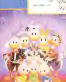
In 19[illegible] permission [illegible] ings of [illegible] helped [illegible] This [illegible] before [illegible] to any [illegible] revoked [illegible] to some [illegible] tions, [illegible] over five years.

In just five years, Barks [illegible] ed over [illegible] the Duck Family [illegible] ing [illegible] most famous [illegible] stories, [illegible] family [illegible]

Some of [illegible] paintings [illegible] the [illegible]

[illegible]





Portrait of a Modern Duck-Man

"I never intended on doing this for a living."

Don Rosa is a modest man. He lives in Kentucky with his wife, and draws ducks for a living.

He has a degree in Civil Engineering, and after graduating college, he went into his family's construction business. There he stayed for quite a few years, until he accidentally fell into the comics industry.

Don Rosa was born nine years after Carl Barks drew his first Donald Duck comic book. He came into a family with older children who already had comic books, and from the time he was able to hold a comic book, Rosa was enjoying the antics of Barks' Duck Family.

Growing up, Rosa enjoyed reading and collecting comics, but with the decline of Western Publishing, the company who published the Disney comics, he never thought about turning his hobby into a career.

"I don't enjoy [superhero] stories very much, so naturally I wouldn't do a good job trying to write or draw them," Rosa said.

But in the mid-1980s things changed. In 1985, Rosa saw a Gladstone comic at a local comic store, and it set off something in his mind.

"I knew right then that this is what I was subconsciously waiting for my whole life," Rosa said.

He always had the ambition to write and draw Duck books, but was never able to take that ambition seriously. After all, Disney comics had not sold well in the United States for many years. There was even a period of about five years in which there were no Disney comics of any sort published in America. Then Gladstone comics was started by a group of people who love Disney comics, and wanted to see them continue on.

For Rosa, getting into comics was not a long haul with a lot of sacrifices. It was just a phone call. "The first day I saw them I called up Byron Erickson, the editor in chief there, and told him that it was my manifest destiny to write and draw Uncle Scrooge comics, and there was nothing he could do about it," Rosa said. "The completely wrong way to get into comic books. One day never intending to do it ever, and the next day I'm writing and drawing a complete issue of a comic book."

That was Rosa's first comic book and it was a book to be proud of. It was later nominated for a Harvey Award as best comic book of the year.

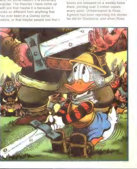
Rosa never had any traditional art training. He is an engineer who fell into an art career by accident, and as a result does not have much confidence in his work.

Rosa doesn't practice. He says he isn't interested in just sitting down and drawing. That idea bores him. Instead, there must be a story. "I had never drawn for more than a few hours a week, and then all of a sudden I was drawing eight or nine hours a day. I wish that I had some formal art training. I would then know how to imply detail without drawing every brick in a wall," Rosa said. "My artwork embarrasses me. Sometimes I like the stories I do, but the general look of the thing sometimes disgusts me. But undeniably, for some reason, it is extremely popular. The theories I have come up with are that maybe it is because it looks so different from anything that has ever been in a Disney comic before, or that maybe people see that I must put in about 10 times more effort into the thing that I need to. When I ask people why they like that awful-looking stuff, most of them say it's because they can tell that I'm enjoying myself so much."

But most fans agree that Rosa's work looks anything but awful. Although the fine detail at times looks out of place in a Disney story, surrounded by talking ducks, it is that same detail that links the Disney world with our own.

While Rosa was pleased to be creating comics for Gladstone, he had difficulty making a living. The Disney books did not do extremely well in the United States, and Gladstone, being a Disney licensee, was not able to pay very well. It wasn't until he connected with European publishing giant Egmont, based in Copenhagen, Denmark, that he was able to really make a decent living. This is the company that holds the Disney comic license for most of Europe and Asia.

In Europe, Disney comics have never really lost their popularity. Disney books are released on a weekly basis there, printing over 3 million copies every week. Unbeknownst to Rosa Egmont had been reprinting the stories he did for Gladstone, and when Rosa



contacted them, asking if they could use his talents, they eagerly accepted. These days, Rosa writes and draws exclusively for Egmont, with the exception of the original covers he produces for Gladstone, for the U.S. reprints of his stories.

Don Rosa loves writing and drawing Disney comics. It is something that he has always wanted to do, and something that he is quite proud of. Unfortunately, he does this despite the policy that Disney has concerning their comic artists.

Generally, anyone who produces artwork on a free-lance basis, is the owner of that art. If the characters depicted in that artwork are copyrighted, the artist must have the permission of the copyright holder to produce the artwork in the first place, but the physical artwork always reverts back to the artist.

This, however, is not the case with Disney artists.

When Rosa, or any other artist drawing Disney comics, draws a comic story, they get paid by the holder of the license to produce the comic book. This is a one-time payment as compensation for the work that has been done.

The artwork is not returned to the artist, thus eliminating any further compensation that the artist can derive from the sale of that artwork.

These artists are also not compensated for any reprints done of their stories. There is no royalty system in place like there is for television and movies. No matter how many times a story is reprinted, the only one who gains any extra income from the reprint is Disney.

Rosa is not bitter about this. "Right now I am currently being hailed around the world as the best person at what I do. It's hard to want to quit that, no matter what I am paid or how I am treated. It's hard not to enjoy being considered best in the world at something, even though you don't make a lot of money at it," he said.

But at the same time, he is conscious that his work is not being returned to him. He doesn't object to the treatment because he is being treated no differently than any other artist who has ever worked for Disney. He wants to work out the system for everyone, and is not interested in any special treatment. He does not want to fight Disney, and only wishes to help them change, keeping in mind how difficult it is for a publicly held corporation to change. And although it may be a long road, he is very patient and has no problem with working things out with Disney.

When asked if he ever thought about doing anything else, Rosa laughed. "Even if I don't ever get paid better, or get the artwork back, I intend to keep on doing this for as long as I can make a living at it." And when questioned about doing any other comic work, he replied, "I have gotten offers from [other comic companies] to do a special project. And I always tell them that I am extraordinarily honored but if I stop for a month or two months to do just one other special story, that would mean by the time I shuffled off this mortal coil, there would be one less duck story I would have done. And that's all I really want to do. Uncle Scrooge and Donald Duck are as alive to me than anyone else, and being able to write and draw their adventures never ceases to be amazing to me. And if someone were to come up to me and tell me that they are the King of England I would say, 'So what,' I write and draw Uncle Scrooge comics, and that's better than anything!"

WE FOUND IT! THE LOST LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA!
BLESS MY DEDUCTIBLES! I'M ABOUT TO DANCE TIP-TOE THROUGH THE SECRETS OF THE ANCIENTS!
I THINK THE OFFICIAL HOUND IS GETTING OFFICIALLY ILL!

DUCK FILES PRICE GUIDE

TITLE

PUBLISHER (Date)

1 Artist-a Writer-w Info on comic
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
TPB (Trade Paperback)
New Series (Date)
1-5
One-shot comic
Limited Series Name of Ltd. Series (Date)
1-4 Price 0.0

AUTUMN ADVENTURES

Disney Comics (1990 & 91)

1	C Barks	3.00
2	C Barks	3.00

THE BEAGLE BOYS

Gold Key (1964-1979)

1	20.00
2-5	10.00
6-10	8.00
11-20	5.00
21-47	2.50

BEAGLE BOYS VERSUS UNCLE SCROOGE

Gold Key (1979-1980)

1	3.00
2-12	1.50

BEST OF DONALD DUCK, THE

Gold Key (Nov. 1965)

1	C Barks	[illegible]

BEST OF DONALD DUCK & UNCLE SCROOGE, THE

Gold Key

1 (Nov. 1964)	C Barks-a	40.00
1 (Sept. 1967)	C Barks-a	32.00

BEST OF UNCLE SCROOGE & DONALD DUCK, THE

Gold Key (Nov. 1966)

1	C Barks	40.00

BEST OF WALT DISNEY COMICS, THE

Western Publishing (1974)

96170	C Barks-a	10.00
96172	C Barks-a	10.00
96173		10.00

CARL BARKS LIBRARY OF GYRO GEARLOOSE AND FILLERS IN COLOR, THE

Gladstone Publishing (1992-1994)

1-6	All Barks Reprints (cover price)	7.95

CARL BARKS LIBRARY OF WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES IN COLOR, THE

Gladstone Publishing (1991-1994)

1-	[illegible]	[illegible]

CARL BARKS LIBRARY OF WALT DISNEY'S UNCLE SCROOGE COMICS ONE PAGERS IN COLOR, THE

Gladstone Publishing (1992)

1,2	All Barks Reprints (cover price)	8.95

CARTOON TALES

Disney (1992)

nn	Uncle Scrooge (cover price)	2.95

CHEERIOS PREMIUMS

Walt Disney Productions (1947)

Four series. 1 Donald Duck in each series. Pocket sized editions

W-1 Donald Duck & the Pirates	35.00
X-1 Donald Duck, Counter Spy	25.00
Y-1 Donald Duck's Atom Bomb by C Barks	425.00
Z-1 Donald Duck Pilots a Jet Plane	25.00

CHEERIOS 3-D GIVEAWAYS

Walt Disney Productions (1954)

Three sets. Donald Duck in various as rated. Pocket sized editions

Set 1	
1 Donald Duck & Uncle Scrooge, Firefighters	55.00
3 Donald Duck's Nephews: the Fabulous Inventors	55.00
5 Donald Duck with Huey, Dewey & Louie, ... the Seafarers	55.00
7 Donald Duck, Apache Gold	55.00
Set 2	
1 Donald Duck, Treasure of Timbuktu	55.00
3 Donald Duck in the Magic Cows	55.00
5 Donald Duck, Mystery Ship	55.00
7 Donald Duck, Circus Adventure	55.00
Set 3	
1 Donald Duck & Witch Hazel	55.00
3 Donald Duck & Uncle Scrooge, Timber Trouble	55.00
5 Donald Duck in Robot Reporter	55.00
7 Donald Duck in the Foreign Legion	55.00

COMIC ALBUM

Dell Publishing (1958)

1	35.00
3	30.00

DAISY AND DONALD

Gold Key/Whitman (1973-1984)

1	8.00
2-5	4.00
6-10	3.00
11-20	2.50
21-59	2.00

DELL GIANTS

Dell Publishing (1959-1961)

22		100.00
26	C Barks-a	275.00
33		125.00
35		100.00
38-39		85.00
47		85.00
49		75.00
53		75.00
53		75.00
55	1st Daisy Duck's nieces	225.00
Christmas in Disneyland		
1	C Barks	170.00
Christmas Parade		
1	C Barks-a	600.00
2	C Barks-a	425.00
8	C Barks-a	175.00
9	C Barks-a	220.00
Donald and Mickey in Disneyland		
1		100.00
Donald Duck Beach Party		
1		125.00
2		85.00
3-5		75.00
6		70.00
Donald Duck Fun Book		
1	(rare in mint)	400.00
2	(rare in mint)	350.00
Donald Duck in Disneyland 1		75.00
Huey, Dewey & Louie Back to School		
1		85.00
Picnic Party		
6	(Formerly Vacation Parade)	100.00
7		100.00
8	C Barks-a	150.00
Uncle Scrooge goes to Disneyland		
1	C Barks-a	275.00
Vacation Parade		
1	C Barks-a	1000.00
2		100.00
3-5		95.00

DISNEY COMIC ALBUM

Disney (1990)

(cover price)

1,2	6.95
3-8	7.95

DISNEY DUCKTALES

Disney (1988-1990)

1	4.00
2-13	2.00

(C Barks in all except 3&6)

DISNEY'S COMICS IN 3-D

Disney Comics (1992)

1	C Barks, D Rosa, F Gottfredson	2.95

DONALD AND MICKEY MERRY CHRISTMAS

KK Publishing (1943-1949)

1943	C Barks-a reprint	425.00
1944	C Barks-a	400.00
1945	C.Barks-a 1st App. Grandma Duck	500.00
1946		335.00
1947	C Barks-a	325.00
1948	C Barks-a	300.00
1949	C Barks-a	350.00

DONALD AND SCROOGE

Disney (1992)

(cover price)

1	8.95

DONALD DUCK

Whitman Publishing Co.(1935,1936)

(Oversized linen-like book. First-ever devoted to Donald as featured character.)

978 (1935) Story book format	1000.00
nn (1936) Reprint with pages added	500.00

DONALD DUCK

Whitman/KK Publications (1938)

1st Donald Duck comic	1000.00

DONALD DUCK

Dell/Gladstone/Gold Key/Whitman (1952-Present)

26		225.00
27-30	C.Barks cover	45.00
31-40		30.00
41-44		20.00
45	C.Barks-a/w	65.00
46	C Barks-a/w	70.00
47-50		20.00
51	C Barks-a/w	15.00
52	C Barks-a/w	60.00
53		15.00

54	C.Barks-a/w	65.00
55-59		15.00
60	C Barks-a/w	60.00
61-67		15.00
68	C Barks-a/w	35.00
69-70		15.00
71		15.00
72-78		15.00
79	C Barks-a/w	17.00
80		15.00
81	C Barks-a/w	15.00
82-97		15.00
98	C Barks reprints	20.00
99-100		15.00
101-134		10.00
135-160		8.00
161-219		5.00
220-245		2.00
246	Gladstone Publishing	8.00
247-249		3.00
250	C Barks reprints	8.00
251-289		2.00

Walt Disney's
COMICS
10¢

DONALD DUCK ADVENTURES
Gladstone (1987-Present)

1	5.00
2-20	2.00
21-31	1.50

DONALD DUCK ADVENTURES
Disney Comics (1990-1993)

1	4.00
2-38	2.00

DONALD DUCK ALBUM
Gold Key (1963)

1-2	20.00

DONALD DUCK BEACH PARTY
Gold Key (Sept. 1965)

1 (#10158-509) C Barks reprints	35.00

DONALD DUCK COMICS DIGEST
Gladstone (1986-1987)

1	C Barks reprints	3.00
2-5		2.00

DONALD DUCK IN THE LITTERBUG
Disney (1963)

Giveaway	30.00

DONALD DUCK MARCH OF COMICS
K.K Publications (1947-1964)

4	C Barks-a/w	5700.00
20	C Barks-a/w	2700.00
41	C Barks-a/w	2000.00
56		200.00
69		175.00
263		50.00

DONALD DUCK AND THE RED FEATHER
(1948)

Red Feather giveaway	85.00

DONALD DUCK "PLOTTING PICNICKERS"
Disney (1962)
Frito Giveaway

nn	35.00

DONALD DUCK'S SURPRISE PARTY
Walt Disney Productions (1948)
Icy Frost Twins Ice Cream Bar Giveaway

nn	Walt Kelly-a ,rare	1800.00

DYNABRITE COMICS
Whitman Publishing Co. (1978-1979)

11352	Donald Duck	C Barks-a
11352-1	Donald Duck	C Barks-a
11353	Daisy Duck	C Barks-a
11355	Scrooge	C Barks-a
11355-1	Scrooge	C Barks-a
11361	Disney Ducks	C Barks-a
		2.00 ea

DUCKTALES
Disney (1990-1991)

1	3.00
2-18	2.00
Movie	7.95

FOUR COLOR
Dell Publishing (1939-1962)

4		6500.00
13 (with various Disney characters)		850.00
17 (with various Disney characters)		950.00
2nd Series		
9	1st C Barks art starts	5500.00
29		4500.00
62		1200.00
108		1000.00
147	Not C Barks-a	550.00
159		500.00
178	1st App. Uncle Scrooge	800.00

Walt Disney's
UNCLE SCROOGE
in "ONLY A POOR OLD MAN"

189		500.00
199		600.00
203		550.00
223		500.00
238		375.00
256		300.00
263		300.00
275		250.00
282		250.00
291		250.00
300		250.00
308		225.00
318		225.00
328	C Barks-a ends	230.00
339		50.00
348		65.00
353		50.00
356		65.00
367	C Barks-a	200.00
379		50.00
386	C.Barks-a	600.00
394		65.00
408	C.Barks-a	200.00
422	C.Barks-a	200.00
450		30.00
456	C.Barks-a	300.00
492		25.00
495	C.Barks-a	275.00
560		25.00
586		25.00
600		50.00
611		25.00
649		25.00
659		20.00
696		25.00
726		20.00
743		20.00
763		50.00
782		20.00
840		20.00
850		20.00
873		35.00
948		20.00
965		30.00
995		25.00
1010	C Barks-a/w	65.00
1051		50.00
1055	C Barks-a	50.00
1073		65.00
1099		25.00
1108	Origin of Donald Duck	135.00
1150	C Barks-a	50.00
1161		65.00
1247		20.00
1279		25.00

GLADSTONE COMIC ALBUM
Gladstone Publishing
(1987-1990)
(cover price)

1,2,4,5,6,7,10	5.95
11-18,19-20	5.95
21,23,24,25	5.95
26-28	5.95
Special 1	9.95
2	8.95
4-5	11.95
6	12.95

GOLDEN PICTURE STORY BOOK
Racine Press (1961)

ST-4	Disney's Wonderful World of Ducks	95.00

GYRO GEARLOOSE
Dell Publishing (1959-1962)

4-color 1047	C Barks-a	75.00
4-color 1095 1184	C Barks-a	50.00
4-color 1267	C Barks	40.00
#01-329-207	C Barks-c	30.00

HOLIDAY PARADE, WALT DISNEY'S
W.D. Publications (1990-91)

1	r-1047 Firestone Giveaway	4.00
2	C Barks-a	3.00

HUEY, DEWEY, & LOUIE JUNIOR WOODCHUCKS
Gold Key/Whitman (1966-1984)

1		30.00
2-5		20.00
6-17		15.00
18-24		8.00
25	C.Barks-w	10.00
27-30		8.00
31-60		6.00
61-81		2.00

JUNIOR WOODCHUCKS LIMITED SERIES
W.D. Productions (1991)

1-4	New and reprint, C Barks-a	2.00 ea

KITE FUN BOOK
Pacific Gas and Electric/ S.Cal. Edison/ Fla. Power & Light (1954)

1st version	Donald Tells About Kites Fla. Power/S.C.E. C Barks (rare)	1650.00
2nd version	- 7th page redrawn to include P.G.&E. in story C Barks (scarce)	1700.00

LARGE FEATURE COMIC
Dell Publishing (1939-1943)

First Series		
16	1st App. Daisy on back cover	1700.00
20	Donald Duck Paint Book (rare)	2600.00

LUDWIG VON DRAKE
Dell Publishing (1961-1962)

1	27.00
2-4	17.00
Ludwig Von Drake Fish Stampede, Giveaway	25.00

MICKEY AND DONALD
Gladstone Publishing (1988-1990)

1	D.Rosa-a	5.00
2		3.00
3		2.50
4-18		2.00

C Barks reprints 1-15,17,18

MICKEY MOUSE MAGAZINE
(BECOMES WDC&S)
K.K./Western Publishing
(1933-1935)

Donald and other Duckburg residents appeared in various issues in text and comics stories. Highlights include:

V1#5	1st Donald solo cover	550.00
V1#6	Donald becomes editor	500.00
V1#8	2nd Donald solo cover	475.00
V2#2	Donald fires himself and appoints Mickey as editor	450.00
V2#3	Donald becomes "Wise Quacks" editor	1500.00
V3#4	Ducky Symphony Begins (ends V3#11)	550.00
V3#11	Donald Duck strip reprint	325.00
V4#1	1st Huey, Dewey & Louie cover	285.00
V4#9	Donald Duck Sunday strip reprint	325.00
V4#10	Donald Duck Sunday strip reprint	375.00
V4#12	Donald's Penguin	350.00
V5#1	Officer Duck	350.00
V5#7	2nd Huey, Dewey& Louie cover	340.00
V5#9	Donald Duck covers & Sunday strip reprints begin	375.00

STORY HOUR SERIES
Whitman Publishing (1948)
Donald Duck in "Bringing Up The Boys"

(1948)	75.00
(1953)	50.00

UNCLE SCROOGE
Dell/Disney/Gladstone/Gold Key/Whitman (1952-1994)

4		200.00
5-6		150.00
7	C Barks-a/w	100.00
8-10		100.00
11-30		75.00
31-60		50.00
61-70		25.00
71	C Barks-w	25.00
72-73		25.00
74-100		15.00
101-120		12.00
121-157		10.00
158		8.00
159-160	C Barks-a/w	8.00
161-164		7.00
165	C Barks-a/w	8.00
166		7.00
167	C Barks-a/w	8.00
168-171		7.00
172-176	C.Barks-a/w	8.00
177-180		5.00
181-183		3.00
184-210		2.00
215-218		2.50
219	D.Rosa-a	15.00
220	D.Rosa-a	5.00
221-249		2.00
250		3.00

UNCLE SCROOGE ADVENTURES
Gladstone (1987-1994)

1	5.00
19	1.50
20-21	2.00
22	1.50
23	3.00
24-27	1.50

UNCLE SCROOGE AND DONALD DUCK
Gold Key (1965)

1	60.00

UNCLE SCROOGE COMICS DIGEST
Gladstone Publishing (1987)

1-5	1.50

UNCLE SCROOGE GOES TO DISNEYLAND
Gladstone Publishing (1985)

1 reprints Dell Giant w/ new cover	3.00
1 Digest sized	2.00

WALT DISNEY'S JUNIOR WOODCHUCKS
Disney (1991)

1-4	Reprints	1.50

WALT DISNEY'S COMICS DIGEST
Gold Key (1968-1976)

1		20.00
2-4		15.00
5	Daisy Duck - last new published story by C. Barks- 8pgs	16.00
6-13		7.00
14,15		5.00

16		9.00
17-20		7.00
21-31,33,35-37		5.00
32		4.00
34		8.00
38		7.00
39		7.00
40-43,45-50,52-57		4.00
44	w/Gold Key emblem	15.00
44	Whitman- blank back cover	7.00
51		5.00

WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES
Dell/Disney/Gladstone/Gold Key/Whitman (1940-Present)

1		8000.00
2		1000.00
3-4		750.00
4	Special cover	1200.00
5		500.00
6-14		400.00
15-21		300.00
22-30		250.00
31	C Barks-a Donald App	1500.00
32	C Barks-a	800.00
33-34	C Barks-a	500.00
35-36	C Barks-a	450.00
37		200.00
38-40	C Barks-a	250.00
41-50	C Barks-a	225.00
51-60	C Barks-a	200.00
61-70	C Barks-a	150.00
71-80	C Barks-a	100.00
81-97	C Barks-a	75.00
98	C Barks-a Uncle Scrooge App.	1250.00
99,100	C.Barks-a	75.00
101-110	C.Barks-a	50.00
111	C.Barks-a	50.00
112		60.00
113		25.00
114	C Barks-a	50.00
115-116		25.00
117	C.Barks-a	50.00

Walt Disney's
COMICS
and STORIES
10¢

118-123		25.00
124	C Barks-a	50.00
125	C Barks-a-1st App. Junior Woodchucks	50.00
126-131	C Barks-a	50.00
132-133	C Barks-a	50.00
134	1st App. Beagle Boys	75.00
135-139	C Barks-a	50.00
140	C Barks-a 1st App. Gyro Gearloose	75.00
141-200	C Barks-a	25.00
201-240	C Barks-a	15.00
241-246	C Barks-a	12.00
247	C Barks-a Gyro Gearloose starts	12.00
248-255	C Barks-a	12.00
256	C Barks-a Ludwig Von Drake starts	12.00
257-283	C Barks-a	12.00
284-285		5.00
286	C Barks-a	10.00
287		5.00
288-289	C Barks-a	10.00
290		5.00
291-294	C Barks-a	10.00
295-296		5.00
297-298	C Barks-a	10.00
299-307	C Barks reprints	10.00
308	C Barks-a	10.00
309-311		5.00
312	C Barks-a	10.00
313-350		5.00
351-360	Without posters	4.00
351-360	With posters	10.00
361-429		5.00
430-445		2.50
446-510		2.00
511-512		3.00
513-545		1.50
546-547		2.00
548-549		1.50
550		2.25
551-573		1.50
574-576		3.00
577-579		1.50
580		3.00
581		1.50
582-583		3.00
584		1.50
585		2.50
586-590		1.50

CARL BARKS LITHOGRAPHS

Another Rainbow Publishing

The information here has been gathered by Another Rainbow and is their estimation as to the current market value of mint-condition lithographs including the original certificates of authenticity.

1 Saving the Spanish Main	$7,000.00
2 An Embarrassment of Riches	$3,900.00
3 Till Death Do Us Part	$1,300.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,850.00
4 A 1934 Belchfire Runabout	$1,700.00
Gold Plate Edition	$2,550.00
5 In Uncle Walt's Collectory	$2,300.00
Gold Plate Edition	$3,400.00
6 Return to Morgan's Island	$1,200.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,800.00
7 Afoul of the Flying Dutchman	$2,300.00
Gold Plate Edition	$3,400.00
8 Dam Disaster at Money Lake	$1,300.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,950.00
9 Dubious Doings at Dismal Downs	$1,200.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,800.00
Progressives	$5,000.00
10 First National Bank of Cibola	$1,000.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,500.00
Progressives	$4,000.00
11 Trespassers Will Be Venerated	$950.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,425.00
Progressives	$4,000.00
12 The Makings of a Fish Story	$1,200.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,800.00
Progressives	$4,500.00
13 Return to Plain Awful	$900.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,350.00
Progressives	$3,500.00
14 Holiday in Duckburg	$1,300.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,950.00
Progressives	$4000.00
15 An Astronomical Predicament	$900.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,300.00
Progressives	$3,500.00
16 Snow Fun	$1,000.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,500.00
Progressives	$3,500.00
17 The Stone That Turns All Metals Gold	$1,100.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,600.00
Friends of the Ducks	$1,375.00
Progressives	$3,500.00
18 March Goes Before the Thaw	$1,100.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,650.00
Golden Anniversary	$1,375.00
Progressives	$3,500.00
19 Halloween in Duckburg	$900.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,350.00
50 Years of Ducks	$1,125.00
Progressives	$3,500.00
20 Dangerous Discovery	$840.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,250.00
Piece of the Roc	$1,250.00
Progressives	$3,000.00
21 This Dollar Saved My Life at Whitehorse	$1,100.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,600.00
Silver Dollar	$1,375.00
Progressive Proof Book	$2,000.00

Miniature Lithographs

1 A Hot Defense	$500.00
Gold Plate Edition	$750.00
10th Anniversary	$625.00
Progressives	$2,250.00
2 Visitor From Underground	$750.00
Gold Plate Edition	$1,125.00
Progressives	$2,750.00
3 Gifts For Shacktown	$380.00
Gold Plate Edition	$570.00
Progressives	$2,000.00
4 Always Another Rainbow	$750.00
Gold Plate Edition	$570.00
Progressives	$2,750.00
5 Blizzard Tonight	$600.00
Gold Plate Edition	$870.00
Huey, Dewey and Louie	$750.00
Progressives	$2,500.00
6 Pick and Shovel Laborer	$360.00
Gold Plate Edition	$540.00
Top Pick	$450.00
Progressives	$1,350.00
7 Sixty Years of Quacking	$300.00
Gold Plate Edition	$450.00
Birthday Cake	$375.00
Progressives	$1,350.00
8 Menace Out of the Myths	$300.00
Gold Plate Edition	$450.00
Maniacal Cackle	$375.00
Progressives	$1,350.00

Limited-Edition Books

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MARKETS

NAVIGATING THE STORMY SEAS OF COMICS

by John Benton

THE VIEW FROM THE NEXUS: PART TWO

WHAT'S AHEAD FOR THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY? LARRY MARDER PUTS IN HIS TWO BEANS

Last month, we talked to Larry Marder, Image's executive director and the "Nexus of Comic Book Realities" about the increasing prices of comic books and the hazards of rigid continuity. This month, we talk about the medium itself:

Can the problems with the market be blamed on a lack of good comics?

I think if you're going to go by percentages there are more good comics being produced now than ever. The trouble is, are there more good *superhero* comics? Personally, I think that as an art form we're going into a period that is maybe its finest since the 1920s in comic strips. You have humor, you have adventure, you have romance, you have funny animals, you have everything that could possibly be existing in the Sunday funnies and everybody read it. I think that there are more things possible right now than maybe ever before. For a guy like Jeff Smith to come out of nowhere and turn *Bone* into what it has become, or a guy like Terry Moore to come out of nowhere and find a following, for a guy like James Owen to come out of nowhere and get a following—I'm sorry, but I don't think there's a paucity right now of good material. What there *is* is a lack of good material that comes out on a regular basis. In comics, I think that more things are possible now than ever before. I think we're going through a hard time right now. We just came out of a five-year period where all you had to do with a comic book was build it and they would come. Today you have to actually go out and sell. Now you're going to cut the wheat from the chaff and find out who is really serious about turning this into a career; who's a good salesman and who's just an order-taker—or an order-placer.

BOOK OF THE MONTH: *GEN13*

Do you see publishers taking more responsibility to expand the market, rather than placing the entire burden on retailers?

I think it is a publisher's responsibility to expand the field for themselves. However, expanding the readership base for comics does not necessarily mean expanding the customer base at the current, retail level. You can go out and find new readers, but it doesn't mean that those new readers are going to come into a comic-book store. They want to go to a bookstore, a mass-marketer, things like that. So when a publisher does anything in that area, they are completely criticized for trying to go around the direct-sales market. That can be a win-win, lose-lose situation, depending on who you are and how you look at it.

It sounds comparable to the music scene. You have the recent surge of interest in "alternative" music because somebody realized it was marketable. It's only a question of getting someone to notice.

Everything that I used to say to my friends was completely justified by Jeff Smith. I can remember, five years ago, discussions late at night with all of my alternative comics buddies and saying, "Look, you guys, there are lots of guys out there doing good work that no one has ever heard of, and they're going to show up completely unannounced, just like I did." I didn't come up out of fandom knowing anyone. I just showed up one day. If there's one of me, there's dozens of me.

Sooner or later, "alternative" comics will have their Nirvana.

Positively.

The superhero stuff will be the bread-and-butter of the industry for how much longer?

The superhero genre has dominated our industry for 35 years, but it has not dominated our industry for its entire history. It was virtually dead for periods as long as five years. Up until about 1993, the largest month in terms of the number of titles that was produced was in 1951 or 1952, and almost all of those comics were romances and Westerns. The point is that there have been two points where we had these big boom and bust cycles, and we also go through periods where superheroes are not necessarily the cat's ass. I think that superheroes are so ingrained right now that they will always exist, but it's not etched in stone that they will always dominate. They certainly dominate now, they have dominated and I think in the short term they will continue to dominate. The comic-book engine is still driven by superhero gasoline. The engine may be knocking, but it's still an engine. The fact that "alternative" comics operate in this atmosphere means that we've got to get the best deal that we possibly can for all comics.

BUZZ BOOK: *THB*

With all the talk about how the industry's in so much trouble, alternative comic readers are beginning to worry about where they will get their books in the future.

That's why it's so important. Like I said, the comic-book engine is being fueled by superhero gasoline. Right now, superhero comics are keeping the doors open for other outlets. I always say that there will always be people who will draw comics, and there will always be people who will read them. But the people who deliver them and sell them, that has changed twice already. First it was the newsstand, then it was direct sales, now we're going into who-knows-what. But the comic books—the guy still gets up in the morning, looks at a blank piece of paper, takes his pencil and starts drawing stories. That hasn't changed since Siegel and Shuster.

Is there anything that the baseline fan can do?

I think that the fans should be vocal in communicating directly to the publishers, telling them exactly what they want in the comic book industry. The way to influence the industry is to tell people what it is that you're thinking. It is *not* to get in fights with other fans on CompuServe. That's fan *stuff*, and that's fine. I'm just saying that if you want to influence what's going on in the comic books that you read, you should write. Those things are taken seriously.

In a lot of cases, fans have valid concerns, but they're telling them to the wrong people.

Public opinion always sways people. Public opinion is not just based on chance. "Why are you against this?" "I'm against it because I'm against it." "Well, why?" "Because Marvel's doing it." That's not good enough.

There's a lot of overreacting going on; people lashing out at Marvel's latest attempt at "world takeover." Even your company, Image, is blamed for everything that goes wrong while providing retailers with their third largest portion of dollars.

Consistently, many of our books fall in the top 25 in sales. If we're so awful, I really don't understand why they're buying us. Of course, all I get out of that is that we're not so awful. There are a couple companies that were hot a couple of years ago, and they're having trouble cracking the Top 100. We can look at it and go, "We have sustained something." Can we sustain it forever? When it comes to entertainment, people can hold on to things for a very long time and then change their minds overnight.

In 1975 or '76, Neal Adams electrified an audience by saying, "The comic book as we know it will not exist five years from now." He was making a judgment based on the reality of the moment, and the reality of the moment was that the Mom 'n' Pop candy store that had a rack of comics in the corner were disappearing left and right, and the things that were replacing them—the 7-Elevens and supermarkets—didn't rack comics. Therefore, there was going to be no outlet for comics and comics were going to die and we should all jump off a building right now. The fact of the matter was that Phil Seuling saw ahead and came up with a completely different solution, which led to the foundation of the direct-sales market. We've made it through one transition; we'll make it through more. ▲

BOOK OF THE MONTH:

Gen13 #1, WILDSTORM
(Choi/Campbell/Garner)

Once again, WildStorm has seen fit to go one-up on the fun variations which can be released for a title! When *Gen13* debuts as an ongoing series this month, there will be ... *13 variant covers???*

As we go to press, the precise distribution of the variants is uncertain. They will include a *Brady Bunch* homage and a "Do-It-Yourself" cover, along with other zany concepts. There's also unconfirmed word that a number of the "Do-It-Yourself" covers will actually be done, featuring one-of-a-kind original art by WildStorm artists.

Though we try not to delve into prediction in this column, it's probably safe to say that the sheer number of variant editions will result in a consumer frenzy. There are a great number of "completists" who will feel it's necessary to get *every* variant, and the rest are likely to suffer the bitter taste of knowing they can't have it. Hopefully, Image will realize that it is possible to get too much of a good thing, and the one-upsmanship will end before too long.

BUZZ BOOK:

THB, HORSE PRESS
(Paul Pope)

Where can you get collapsible robots, bug-headed bureaucrats, all-girl boarding schools, an inflatable bodyguard, a killer grand piano, a mysterious chest apparatus and the latest on the Martian band scene? All in Paul Pope's surrealist fantasy/adventure, *THB*, one of the most innovative comics to hit the store shelves. Set on Mars in the 23rd century, it tells the story of HR Watson, the 13-year-old daughter of a robot manufacturer. When her father's business brings him in conflict with the Martian government, HR becomes a target for spies and assassins, and a magnet for all kinds of weirdness. Helping HR in her time of need is her giant artificial bodyguard, THB. THB stands for Tri-Hyrdo-Bioxygenate, and in its natural form looks like a small rubber ball, but just add water and he becomes a seven-foot-tall, rubber-bodied thing.

Paul Pope has created a completely unique, richly detailed story with great characters, and it got an extra boost from Dave Sim in a recent *Cerebus*. Check it out.

COMING

HERO ILLUSTRATED

Our Cover Feature:

BADROCK & VIOLATOR: A COVER BY BRIAN DENHAM AND A DEVILISH, MAGICAL INTERVIEW WITH ALAN MOORE!

ROB LIEFELD RAGES AGAINST THE *HERO* MACHINE!

WHAT HAPPENED AT MARVEL?
TOM DeFALCO TALKS!

AL WILLIAMSON & MARK SCHULTZ
ON THE RETURN OF *FLASH GORDON!*

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HHID8

FINALLY

COMMENTARY BY JAMES ROBINSON

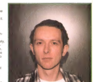
I'm standing in a glass house and I'm about to throw a few stones. I'm going to accuse comics of not being everything that they could be, but as I do so, I'm fully aware that I'm as guilty of blame as anyone else. What am I talking about? Variety in comics. Where is it?

I know there are many titles out there encompassing a great many art styles and subject matters, but I do question whether there are enough. I write a monthly superhero title for DC. I've written other such works for DC, Marvel, Dark Horse, Image and Malibu. But there is a time when I question what I do, and that's when the distributor catalogues come out each month. These tome-like publications are full of superhero titles. FULL. Almost every new, large-scale publisher makes their big unveiling with ... yet more superheroes. Is that as far as anybody thinks nowadays? A power, a flashy costume, two staples in the spine and away to the printers we go. Is that all there is? Man, I hope not.

Now, I know the return argument. Of course, there are titles that counterbalance this. Fantagraphics have always produced works of diverse quality. DC has its Vertigo and Paradox lines. Slave Labor, Kitchen Sink, the other independents. Sure, sure, and thank God for them. But how much of a market share do they account for, even including Vertigo? I don't know the exact percentage, but I'd guess Marvel isn't sweating any about it.

In days of yore, all the comic companies published a variety of subject matters. Yeah, some of it had masks and capes, but a whole hell of a lot of it didn't. I think the most obvious omission today (in terms of a comic book subject that I don't quite see why it's no longer) has to be the crime comic.

Frank Miller has said in interviews that the great Johnny Craig (from EC's *Shock Suspenstories* and *Crime Suspenstories*) was a comic book influence on *Sin City*. However, Craig was only one creator among many exploring the crime comic. Why is *Sin City* loved by so many? On one hand, the answer's simple: Miller's work is always wonderful and *Sin City* is no exception. However, if the question is, why is it that Miller appears to stand alone in exploring the crime milieu today—the same milieu that Craig and countless others all did so well in the '40s and '50s—the answer isn't so readily apparent. Can Miller honestly be the only one doing it today?



At least Miller is doing it. At least there is a crime comic or two out there. Western, Romance and Sports comics are all genres that have vanished from the stands completely, all devoured by the ever-hungry superhero glutton. Now you may say, "Come on, James. Who wants to read Westerns? Who wants to read a love story?" And I'd agree that subjects do go out of vogue. There aren't any gladiator movies being made today, yet in the '50s they seemed to be all that was putting food on Victor Mature's table. Within films, there are still a variety of subjects featured. To even state such an obvious fact seems silly. Not *just* comedies. Not *just* thrillers. Why, oh why, are there so many superhero books, and so little else?

Now, I'm not necessarily blaming anyone. Publishers print what sells. Distributors distribute what there is a demand for. Retailers who don't stock what sells have a surprising habit of going out of business. And ultimately, it's a free world and people buy what they buy. I'm trying to understand here, honestly, but the sheer morass of superheroes nevertheless puzzles me.

Kids like them? Sure, as a kid I loved them too, but I'd be willing to guess that 80 percent of *HERO ILLUSTRATED*'s readership is over 16, and that 50 percent are in their mid-20s. And yet, with a world of adult responsibilities and mature thoughts about work and life, you still trek forth to your comic store and pay good cash to see Thor kick Loki's arse for the umpteenth time.

Maybe I am blaming you, the reader. Maybe if the buck stops somewhere, it has to stop with you. The serious fans out there must be constantly aware of how belittled comics are by mainstream society. But if a layman entered a comic store and saw the same spandex steroid posedown covers, with nothing else to offset that, where is there anything that might change the layman's misconception?

I'm not entirely clear what you're buying the comics for, either. Is it the writing? The art? Or is it the soap-opera quality of comics; the reassuring "same old" every month?

I know it reads like I'm on some high horse. I write enough superhero books myself. Like I said at the start, I know I'm in a glass house here. The fact is, I enjoy reading a good superhero comic too. I was wrapped up in the latest *Flash* run, just like all of you. *The Spectre* rules. I like *Deathblow*. If you count *Hellboy* and *Madman* as superhero comics, then I am there, too. And there is nothing sweeter than a good *Batman* book. But I also have time for other stuff, the Slave Labor and the Fantagraphics and the Drawn & Quarterly.

If you feel there should be more to comics than superheroes, start looking and you may well find more. Encourage that taste in yourself and your friends, and before long the retailers will take notice, which in turn will make the distributors notice, which, in turn, will allow publishers the freedom to try a more diverse range of works. Go on. It's good enough for Europe and Japan, so why not America, too?

And no, buying Jeff Smith's *Bone* doesn't absolve you if you also buy every book Marvel puts out. ▲

[James Robinson has written The Golden Age, Starman, WildC.A.T.s *and* Firearm, *as well as the distinctly non-superhero books* Witchcraft, Bluebeard *and* Illegal Alien.*]*

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